

# INTO THE VOID

A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY

---

FLORENCE CONVERSE

P2  
3  
C76i

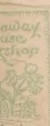
**MOUNT ALLISON  
MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

PRESENTED BY


Dr. R.C. Archibald

19 46

**WITHDRAWN**







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/intovoid0000unse>



**INTO THE VOID**  
**A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY**



# INTO THE VOID

## A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY

BY  
FLORENCE CONVERSE



BOSTON  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1926



*Copyright, 1926,*  
**By FLORENCE CONVERSE.**

---

*All rights reserved*

Published September, 1926.

THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY PRESS PUBLICATIONS  
ARE PUBLISHED BY  
LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY  
IN ASSOCIATION WITH  
THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY COMPANY

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO A CONNOISSEUR  
IN  
MYSTERY STORIES  
MY MOTHER

A 44 294





INTO THE VOID  
A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY



## CHAPTER I

It was the night before the Game, and New England highways were rivers of stars in spate, rushing on Boston. The Bookshop at the crossroads rocked on its ancient cellar walls as the motor cars racketed by. The little old rambling red house faced the turnpike, and every half hour the single-track trolley car came rumbling through the flood, east or west, sounding its gong at the crossing where the Emerson Road bridge above the railroad dipped past the Bookshop's northwest gable. In the gulf at the back of the house the trains roared, local, express, and freight, according to schedule.

The Poet's reading was drawing to a close. If the Poet had belonged to the school of Vachel Lindsay, he could have rejoiced in the tumult, and sent his triumphant voice booming above it to split the eardrums of his rapt listeners. But he was of another school. For him, poetry to be effective must be read



under the breath, *à demi voix*, intimately, sighed rather than said, in undertones and whispers. The charming young Manager of the Bookshop had been in despair, but after the sixth poem faded out she invented an intermission not on the programme and engaged the poet in conversation.

“It is n’t always like this, you know,” she said, her candid hazel eyes lifted regretfully to his mutinous gaze. “If I had known — but I chose to-night because I thought the college girls might bring their visiting men. And you see, they have.”

The Bookshop was full to overflowing with college girls and the young men who were taking them to the game to-morrow, not to mention the President of the College, the President of the Bank, the President of the Woman’s Club, the Principal of the Girls’ Preparatory School, the Master of the Boy Scouts, three clergymen, fifteen professors, six wealthy landowners and their wives, and thirty-two villagers unknown to fame and fortune. The Manager of the Bookshop allowed her eyes to stray complacently over

this record-breaking audience. But the eyes of the Poet did not stray, and presently the Manager came back to them. "I just can't bear to have these people missing your lovely things," she said wistfully, "but I'm perfectly certain they can't hear you three feet away. I know this room. It carries well when the street is quiet, and between trains. But to-night —" she paused to give her desperation its full effect, and then, "I'm awfully afraid you'll have to raise your voice."

If there was one thing more than another that the Poet hated to do, it was to raise his voice.

But she was very appealing. She was sweet! It was a shame to spoil her show. And she'd sold two hundred and fifty copies of his *Poems* yesterday and to-day.

"So be it," said he.

"And I'll stand over there at the back," she cried gayly, "and lift my finger, so, when I think they're not hearing." Which she did so effectively that by the time the Poet had come to his last number he could be heard by the passing motorists out of doors.

“Now I ’m going to read you a poem called ‘Disappearance,’” he trumpeted. “And then — I shall disappear.”

And when everyone had applauded his wit, he read, with all the organ stops in his voice pulled out full length, a little free-verse lyric he had written that afternoon and had meant to interpret murmurously, in a dying fall : —

“I can vanish away  
When I please,”

he shouted.

“I can disappear  
And no one knows that I have gone.  
My dearest friend  
Thinks that I am walking  
Beside him.  
But I am not there.  
My hand lies in his,  
But I,  
The Magician,  
The Miracle Worker,  
I have pranced into the Fourth  
Dimension.  
I can disappear,  
And no one knows that I have gone.”



The last two lines, the refrain, out-thundered the New York and Boston Express, that moment passing by.

“And now,” suggested the Manager of the Bookshop, “you’ll autograph your *Poems* for them, won’t you?”

So he did, for another three quarters of an hour. And the college girls filtered away, chanting his praises in the ears of their rather unresponsive young men, who had spent good money to take them to the Game to-morrow and were feeling — well — the way young men do feel under such circumstances.

“My hand lies in his,”

shouted the young women, dragging their escorts across the turnpike, through the starry welter of automobiles, at the risk of their lives.

“My hand lies in his,  
But I,

. . . . .

I have pranced into the Fourth  
Dimension.”

And the venerable Masfield Professor of Poetry, who was literary godmother to all good — or indifferent good — young poets,

came up to congratulate him with a twinkle in her eye and a wicked chuckle in her voice, upon his new method of interpreting his poems; and, "Yes," said the Poet, hoarsely, "just like a radio amplifier, was n't it?"

And the President of the College, as she shook the Poet's hand, turned to the Manager of the Bookshop and said, "Would n't it be a great advertisement for the Bookshop, Miss Farwell, if Mr. Slocumbe should exercise his peculiar gift and really disappear into the Fourth Dimension — not like the gentleman in the Bab Ballad, but clothes and all?"

"Anything to oblige," said the Poet.

"It would mean a new edition of your *Poems*," said the Manager of the Bookshop.

"I'll think about it," said the Poet, "if you'll disappear with me."

"But then who'd sell the *Poems*?" objected the Manager of the Bookshop.

"The Masfield Professor would," said the President of the College. "She'd like nothing better; would n't you, Miss Carter?"

"But I could n't make change," said the Masfield Professor.

"I would make change," said the President of the College. "I love to make change."

"Let 's," said the Poet, holding out his hand to the Manager of the Bookshop. And, "I'll think about it," said she; and feeling that the time had come to change the subject, though not too abruptly, she said to the President of the College, "Oh, Miss Armitage, speaking of disappearance, I have a jolly new detective story in the Lending Library. I thought of you when I put it in. It's *The Death of a Millionaire*."

"That always interests me," said the President. "Did he make a will?"

"It 's by the radical English economist and labor sympathizer, G. D. H. Cole, and it 's a thriller," the Manager of the Bookshop added.

"I'm afraid the Trustees won't approve of my reading it," said the President, but she tucked the book under her arm. And the President of the Bank and the President of the Woman's Club, and the Principal of the Girls' Preparatory School, and the Master of the Boy Scouts, and the three clergymen, and the fifteen professors, and the six wealthy

landowners and their wives, and the thirty-two villagers, who had been "listening-in" at this academic symposium, knew that the time had come to brave the dangers of the highway; so those who had automobiles parked in the empty lot under the south gable of the Bookshop went out to start them; and those who had n't, set forth on foot, dodging among the stars of that Milky Way.

And as the President of the College and the Masefield Professor of Poetry, who were the last to leave, turned at the College gate — for the campus ran along the other side of the turnpike — to wave a good-night to the Manager of the Bookshop, who was standing in the lighted doorway of her shop, they saw the Poet leaning on the Emerson Road bridge above the railroad, looking southeast toward Boston, a lonely and poetical figure, even if it was a railroad bridge.

And, "What do you really think of his poetry?" said the President of the College to the Masefield Professor of Poetry as they went through the College gate.

## CHAPTER II

AT ten o'clock on the morning of the Game, three people met at the door of the Bookshop, and it was closed. Dr. Thorpe, the minister of the Congregational church, tried the door, but it was locked. Dorothy Fentress, the Head of Student Government, tried the door in what had been the kitchen extension when the Bookshop was a little old red farmhouse one hundred years ago; but that too was locked. Winterbury, the florist, with a long lavender box under his arm, knocked on the first door, a rousing rat-tat. Then they all waited a long moment.

"I thought it opened at nine," said Dr. Thorpe.

"It does," said Dorothy Fentress. "There are never many people here in the mornings, so Miss Farwell does n't have any student helpers except from three to five-thirty. But I never knew her not to be here herself." The girl was moving from window to window,



peering into the shop as she made this explanation. Suddenly she said, "I see it!"

"What?" exclaimed Mr. Winterbury and Dr. Thorpe, sharply and simultaneously.

"My fur neckpiece. I could n't remember. I was afraid I'd lost it on the road going home; but look!"

Mr. Winterbury and Dr. Thorpe peered over her shoulders into the bookroom. The fur neckpiece was lying on a small table beside a rack full of Everyman's Library books.

"That's not where I was last night," said Miss Fentress. "I was sitting over in that corner by the Lending Library shelves. I guess she found it when she was folding up the extra chairs."

"It's all in order," murmured Dr. Thorpe. He had moved to another window and was surveying that part of the shop which had once been the farmhouse kitchen. The others followed him, and together they went around the house looking in at all the windows.

"What's upstairs?" asked the florist.

"Oh, she does n't live here," said Dorothy Fentress.

"I know she don't. I know where she lives," retorted the florist. "I know where everybody lives. I was just asking."

"There's a children's room upstairs. And etchings and such things," Dorothy Fentress explained.

Dr. Thorpe looked at his watch. Ten-fifteen. "Of course!" he said crisply. "Why did n't we think of it? She's disappeared." And he laughed.

"Into the Fourth Dimension," cried Dorothy Fentress; and they both laughed.

Mr. Winterbury, not being in the joke, regarded their levity with disapprobation. "Well," he said, "I don't like to leave these roses outside. It's not what you'd call a warm day. And with all these cars going by, some young fella might see this box and think it would save him five dollars on his girl. I don't trust 'em."

"Why don't you leave it at her home?" Dr. Thorpe suggested.

"Well," said Winterbury, "I always try to do what I'm told. And that Poet said here, this morning."

"Oh, the Poet!" murmured Dorothy Fentress.

"Do you think she has disappeared?" asked the florist.

"Oh, no, no, no!" Dr. Thorpe's laugh rang out. "It's just a joke."

"Perhaps he's going to take her to the Game," said Dorothy, "so she thought she would n't open the shop. I'm going round to her house, Mr. Winterbury, to get the key, for my fur neckpiece. I'll deliver the flowers."

"No," said Dr. Thorpe. "He told me he was leaving for New York at ten o'clock to spend Sunday. He has an appointment Monday afternoon to read before the Woman's Club at Orange, New Jersey."

"Thank you, Miss Fentress," said the florist, "but I'm going right back to the greenhouse. It's on my way."

"Now, Mr. Winterbury, you think I want to wear those flowers to the Game," laughed the girl.

And just then Traffic Officer Murphy came hurrying into the turnpike from the Emerson

Road bridge. The heel of a lady's brown suède slipper protruded from the pocket of his coat, and he had a broken bottle in his hand.

"Oh, Mr. Murphy," called Dr. Thorpe, "here's something in your line. A mysterious disappearance. Miss Farwell has gone into the Fourth Dimension. We can't get in."

"That's a new one on me, sir," grinned the big officer. "The ball game, is it? I can't keep up with the college slang." And he was hurrying off, but Winterbury boomed after him:—

"Hey, Murphy! You look as if you'd found something. What's in that bottle? I'm going to report yuh."

"Go up across the bridge and see what you see," Murphy called over his shoulder. "Don't touch anything. I'll be back in ten minutes."

"I need that copy of von Hügel for my tomorrow's sermon," Dr. Thorpe remarked to no one in particular. He tried the windows on each side of the front door, but they held fast, and with an impatient "Tchk," he

followed the florist and the Head of Student Government across the bridge.

On the other side of the bridge, Alcott Street begins, at right angles to Emerson Road and running parallel to the railroad tracks. The two corner lots at the beginning of Alcott Street are empty fields. And this morning there was a little old Ford car jammed against the rail fence on the east side of the street, just around the corner from Emerson Road. It was evident to the minister and the florist and the Head of Student Government that a large automobile had whizzed round that corner, collided with the Ford, sliced off the little car's left front wheel, and smashed the mudguard. The rail fence had given way under the impact and let the right wheels of the Ford down into the field.

Dr. Thorpe, the florist, and the Head of Student Government stood a moment in silence before the derelict. Then, moved as by a common impulse, they lifted up their noses and sniffed. Standing in the middle of the road, transfixed in this doggy gesture, they were an intriguing group. A Boy Scout,

alert for the one good deed to crown his day, paused to consider them and their surroundings.

"Say, do you think it's this?" he said almost at once, pointing to a wet spot that must have lately been a puddle in the middle of the road. Kneeling on hands and knees, he bent his head above the moist circle. "Yep," he said, "hooch," and knelt on, wriggling his flexible young nose.

The florist went over to the Ford and peered in. The cushions of the seats were askew. "Come here a minute, Doctor," he said. Under the cushions the usual seats had been turned into oblong receptacles fitted with cunningly contrived sliding covers. These covers had been drawn out and were lying in the bottom of the car. The hollow spaces which they had concealed were empty, but for some scatterings of broken glass. Dorothy Fentress came over and joined the explorers. So did the Boy Scout.

"I don't understand why the car should be over here when the puddle is over there," said Dr. Thorpe. "If the collision smashed

the bottles, — supposing they were bottles, — why is n't the puddle under the car?"

"Hi!" said the Boy Scout. He was standing on the middle rail of the fence, looking over into the field. The minister, the florist, and the Head of Student Government hurried to the fence. Lying side by side in two rows, under a bush in the corner of the field, were three dozen green glass bottles. Five of them were broken. The Boy Scout swung a leg over the top rail of the fence.

"No, no," said Dr. Thorpe, hauling him back, "Officer Murphy does n't want anything touched."

"I want to see if they 're empty," said the Boy Scout.

"They 're uncorked," said the florist.

The Hornbeam Farm milk-truck came along Alcott Street at this moment and the driver shut off his gas and joined the group at the fence rail. "Say," he began, "this little old Ford was a-layin' here on her side, six o'clock this mornin', when I come round the corner. I like to went right over her. Somebody ought to warn the police. She 's a danger to



traffic. Where's her owner? In hospital? — Say-ay-y!" his eyes had fallen on the serried ranks of green glass bottles. "Looks like somebody was tryin' to steal my milk route." He laughed uproariously at his own jest and started to climb the fence, but Winterbury put out a detaining hand.

"The public is requested not to handle," said Winterbury.

"Say," chortled the milkman, sniffing. "Some smell! But it don't say it with flowers."

"Cornflowers," suggested Winterbury.

"What's the joke, gentlemen?" said a voice from the road. Police Captain Torrey and Traffic Officer Murphy had arrived, and laughter ceased for the moment. The milkman, the florist, the Pastor, the Boy Scout, and the Head of Student Government stood respectfully at the side of the road while the Police Captain and the Traffic Officer went over the ground literally and figuratively.

"You know anything about this smash-up, Jimmie Colby?" the Police Captain asked the milkman.

"All I know, Cap'n, this little old car was layin' right like she is now at six o'clock this mornin', when I come round the corner of Emerson Road."

"Six o'clock."

"Well, maybe quarter of."

"You pass by the police station, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Why did n't you report this car?"

"I — never — thought —"

"You never thought! What kind of answer is that to give to me?"

"Aw, Cap'n, I have to deliver my milk —"

"How do I know it was n't you wrecked this car, Jimmie Colby?"

"Aw, say, Cap'n," the milkman grinned foolishly. "What would I do with the corpse?"

"When I find the corpse I'll know," retorted the Police Captain. "Now you and your truck get off this road and deliver your milk. When I want you I'll send for you."

"Want me?" gasped the milkman, deserted by his sense of humor. "Want me?" As he

hurtled round the corner into Emerson Road he shouted, "I bet I ain't the only one passed that little ole darn car an' never reported her. I don't see why you pick on me!"

"That 's just it, Doctor," said the Police Captain, addressing his grievance to Dr. Thorpe. "There 's no knowing how many people have seen this car, and it never occurred to them to go out of their way to let anybody know. And then the selectmen come down on us for not patrolling the roads. Why, last night every man I 've got was detailed for the turnpike till after midnight, checking up on the football fans. But of course it 's nobody's fault but mine if somebody wrecks a car on a side road. Where 'd this car come from, Murphy?"

"I was just looking, Cap'n." The Traffic Officer got down on his knees and abstracted the license number from under the car, where it had fallen. "N. H. 169646."

"New Hampshire," said Captain Torrey, "via Canada probably. If it is n't a fake number."

"The way I dope it out is this, Cap'n," said

Traffic Officer Murphy. "There 's thirty-six bottles under that bush, but there 's room for four dozen in these two seats. Now I say, the bootlegger parked his car here by the fence and took a dozen bottles to deliver — well — somewhere within easy walking distance, and while he was gone somebody came round the corner breaking the speed laws and there was a smash-up. A big car, it was; and when it found out there was nobody in the Ford, it did n't wait."

"But, Officer," said Dr. Thorpe, "why is the puddle in the middle of the road instead of by the car?"

"And who put the bottles under the bush?" asked the Boy Scout. "Would the bootlegger?"

"Just where was the lady's shoe, Murphy?" the Captain inquired, rather pointedly ignoring the interested bystanders.

"Here, Cap'n," and the Traffic Officer drew the brown suède slipper from his pocket and planted it in the road between the puddle and the Ford.

The Head of Student Government gasped

and looked at her slippers. The one in the road was their twin, or rather their triplet.

"Is it yours, Miss?" cried Murphy, astounded.

"Gosh, Mr. Murphy, she ain't a quadruped!" remarked the Boy Scout.

"Perhaps it's your roommate's," suggested Dr. Thorpe.

"No; these I have on are my roommate's," said the Head of Student Government.

"You don't know the Cinderella that dropped this one?" asked the Police Captain.

"N-n-o, and yet I seem to remember seeing somebody lately with slippers like mine."

"But of course this slipper does n't belong to a college girl," said Dr. Thorpe crisply.

"I would n't trust 'em." The Captain's tone was gloomy.

The Head of Student Government gave him a fiery glance and turned away with dignity. Addressing Dr. Thorpe, she said, "I must get the key of the Bookshop if Miss Farwell is n't opening it this morning. Was there something you wanted in the shop, Doctor?"

"There's a copy of von Hügel, Miss Farwell

ordered for me. I'll come with you. Well, Captain, quite an excitement for our quiet little community. I wish you luck." And Dr. Thorpe strode off briskly after Miss Fentress.

"I'm coming too, Doctor," called the florist. "I clean forgot these roses," and he hurried to catch up with the other two.

"Now, Willie Penfield," said the Police Captain to the Boy Scout, "I want you to run down to the police station and tell Officer Meeker, or whoever's there, to come right along up here with the runabout and a rope to tie to this Ford so we can tow her in. And — hold on, Willie: what were you doing round here this morning?"

"Me, Captain? My mother sent me down to the Atlantic and Pacific Tea Store to get some groceries —"

"Well, you better get them, Willie; don't you think?"

"Yes, sir," said Willie respectfully.

The two policemen watched him till he was well on his way down Alcott Street. Then Traffic Officer Murphy, standing by the

muddy spot in the road, said, "Come over here, Captain. I want you to look at something. I noticed it when I crossed over to put the slipper down on the road, but I thought I would n't mention it till you and me could get together alone."

"Just as well," agreed the Police Captain grimly.

"Right here," said Officer Murphy, indicating a portion of the circumference of the muddy spot. "Do you see?"

"Sure!" said the Captain. "What do you think the fella was doing that made them?"

"Lappin' it up," laughed Murphy. He went over to the Ford and returned with one of the sliding covers that had concealed the hollows in the seats. This he laid down at the edge of the muddy spot. Then taking a large clasp knife from his pocket he proceeded to cut out of the edge of the muddy spot two thick sods of earth, roughly square. These, with the help of the Captain, he slid very gingerly upon the sliding cover. They were intaglios of the palms and ten finger-prints of two hands.



### CHAPTER III

MISS FARWELL lived with her great-aunt in the ell of a large, old-fashioned, dignified house with a mansard roof, on the corner of Alcott Street and Thoreau Road. The building had been made over into apartments a year or two before, three in the main house and a duplex in the ell, which had its own front door. Patty Farwell had rented the duplex because it was within five minutes' walk of the Bookshop, and because the windows looked out to the sunset through a clump of pine trees that grew on a knoll above Thoreau Road, screening the house from the road on that side.

The Head of Student Government, the Pastor, and the florist went up into the porch, and Miss Fentress pressed the electric bell. But no one came to the door. There was a brass knocker on the upper middle panel of the door, a small bronze copy of the Imp of Lincoln Cathedral, and Mr. Winterbury

knocked quite vigorously with this. But there was no sound within. Dr. Thorpe pressed the electric bell again for several seconds. It could be heard ringing loud and clear; the battery was in perfect order.

"Looks like old Miss Patience Farwell had disappeared, too," said Winterbury jocosely.

Just then a window on the second floor of the main house was raised and Mrs. Penfield looked out. Mrs. Penfield, the wife of a plumber and the mother of a Boy Scout, was also the janitress and owner of the apartment house. Her husband had given her the deed on her last birthday. She took a great interest in all her tenants and usually knew what they were going to do day after to-morrow, even though she had not been personally informed.

"Old Miss Farwell went away Thursday morning to visit an old school friend in Springfield and I don't expect her back till Tuesday, though she said she'd be back Monday night. But she always stays longer than she thinks she will. And Miss Patty's at the shop," said Mrs. Penfield.

"No, she's not at the shop, Mrs. Penfield; you're mistaken," said Dr. Thorpe.

"Not at the shop!" Mrs. Penfield was nonplussed. "But of course she's at the shop. Where would she be if she was n't?"

"Did you see her go this morning?" asked Mr. Winterbury.

"No; but she always does go; rain or shine."

"She's not there," said Dorothy Fentress. "You don't happen to have an extra key to the shop, do you, Mrs. Penfield? I want awfully to get in."

"No, Miss Fentress, but I know where she keeps the extra key. I'm not sure she'd like —" Mrs. Penfield eyed her audience reflectively. "I can't think where she'd be."

"I've got some roses here, Mrs. Penfield," said Mr. Winterbury. "Could you take charge of them?"

"Sure! I'll be right down." Mrs. Penfield withdrew her head, shut down her window, and presently came round the corner of the house with her hat on, struggling into her coat.

"I'll put the roses in water, and then I'll

run down to the shop," she said, taking the lavender box from the florist. "I suppose there's a card with them?"

"I think he wrote a poem on it, he took so long about it," said Winterbury.

"Oh — him!" said Mrs. Penfield. "She had him to dinner yesterday, before the reading, with little Miss Carter, the Poetry Professor at the College. I cooked the dinner for them, Miss Farwell being away and I'm so fond of both of them. That Poet ate real hearty. I thought they was supposed not to."

Mrs. Penfield had opened the door of the ell and was now arranging the roses in a vase on a table in the little square hall, while Dr. Thorpe, Mr. Winterbury, and Miss Fentress stood outside on the porch. "Now I'll get that other shop key." They heard her opening a drawer in the living-room, and Dr. Thorpe raised his eyebrows. She came out presently, and locking the door of the apartment with her janitress's key: "Now I'm going down to the shop, if you want to come with me," she said.

"Time I was back in the greenhouse," said

Winterbury. "My wife 'll think I've disappeared, next."

"There was a book —" said Dr. Thorpe. He hesitated. "I think I'll wait till I can see Miss Farwell, thank you." And he followed Winterbury.

But the Head of Student Government went along with Mrs. Penfield, up Alcott Street, toward Emerson Road.

The police department had just succeeded in getting the Ford in condition to be towed to the police station. Traffic Officer Murphy was walking beside it to keep it from slewing off on its three wheels. Officer Meeker was driving the runabout, and Captain Torrey sat beside him with the wooden cover and its contents across his knees.

"Here comes Joe Penfield's wife," said Traffic Officer Murphy. "Step on the gas, Meeker, before she applies the third degree."

But their progress was necessarily slow, and Mrs. Penfield caught up with them in the middle of the bridge.

"Miss Fentress, here, says you've had quite a haul, Murphy," she said.

"Yep," agreed the Traffic Officer. "Thirty-six empty bottles, five of them smashed."

There was a derisive note in Mrs. Penfield's laughter. "Did you ever catch a bootlegger, Murphy?" she asked.

Officer Murphy was silent and the Captain said, "See if she 'll bear a little more speed, Meeker. How about it, Murphy?"

"All right, Cap'n. I can steer her," said Murphy.

"You look like you 'd been making patty-cakes, Cap'n," said Mrs. Penfield. "Goin' to take the mud up to the college laboratory to see if the chemistry professor can tell if it's whiskey or cider?"

"How 'd you guess, Mrs. Penfield?" said the Captain; and the police department drew away down the bridge, around the corner into the turnpike.

"If you see my Willie," Mrs. Penfield called after them, "tell him I 'm at the Bookshop." And she and the Head of Student Government went up on the long narrow porch that ran across the front of the low, red, old-fashioned frame house.

"No; she's not here," said Mrs. Penfield, trying the door. "I can't think how she could go anywhere without me knowing it." She inserted the key and opened the door. "Here 's the cat."

"Oh!" exclaimed the Head of Student Government.

"That would n't mean anything," said Mrs. Penfield. "She often leaves her here overnight. There 's mice in this old house. Here Bibelot, Bibelot, Bibi! Ain't that a name for a cat! Where 's your mistress?"

But pussy only waved her plummy tail, and arched her fluffy gray back, and smiled cryptically out of her blue-green eyes, and purred. Her saucer for milk and her saucer for water were empty.

"This is mine," said the Head of Student Government, catching up her neckpiece. "You know, I think it 's just a joke, Mrs. Penfield, and so does Dr. Thorpe. The Poet read a poem about disappearing, and afterward President Armitage said what a good ad it would be for the Bookshop if there was a mysterious disappearance. I think Miss Far-



well's just done it for fun. And very few people would come to the shop the morning of the ball game."

"But where would she disappear to?" said Mrs. Penfield.

"Well, of course, if we knew, it would n't be a joke, would it?" said the Head of Student Government. "I'm afraid I'll have to go now. My roommate'll think I've disappeared if I don't meet her at the twelve-ten train, and I have to go up on campus first. You'll tell Miss Farwell I took the neckpiece, won't you, when she comes home?"

Left to herself, Mrs. Penfield addressed the cat: "Is she here, Bibi? Is your Missie Patty here? Is she hiding upstairs for a joke?" And together they searched the house. But the Manager of the Bookshop was not there. Pausing on the cellar stairs, Mrs. Penfield said, "Would n't it be awful if she fell in the furnace?" But so far as Mrs. Penfield could tell by a hasty survey, this catastrophe had not occurred. There was evidence that the Boy Scout, her son, had been in and taken out the ashes. There was

a can of ashes outside the cellar door at the back of the house, waiting for the ashman; and Mrs. Penfield remembered that it had not been there the day before. She poked in the ashcan with a stick, and then said, "Ain't I the fool!" and threw the stick away.

As she was dusting her hands, Willie came round the house, laden with sugar, apples, and Dutch Cleanser.

"You took your time, did n't you, Willie?" said his mother. "Did you happen to see Miss Farwell in the village?"

"No'm; is n't she in the Bookshop?" asked Willie.

"If she was, would I be asking you if she was in the village?" retorted Willie's mother. "That's no way to carry sugar, Willie Penfield. Give me the bag before it bursts."

At the corner of Emerson Road and Alcott Street, ground into the earth in the deep rut made by the Ford's left hind wheel, they found the Poet's small thin volume of verse, folded back upon itself, and cracked lengthwise down the middle. On the very dirty flyleaf against which the tire of the wheel had

ground, there was an inscription: at the top, "To —" and something illegible in a splotch of mud; farther down, "To remind you of the night I raised my voice." Then, "Let us prance into the Fourth Dimension." Then, "Paul Slocumbe."

Mrs. Penfield smoothed out the dirty, battered little book. "It was under the wheel," she said. "Under the hind wheel. And when they got the Ford going, they never looked back."

"What's the Fourth Dimension, Ma?" asked Willie.

"Something to do with plumbing, Willie; you'll know when you get older. Your pa has to do everything in dimensions."

"Shucks, I know about dimensions," said Willie.

"Then what did you ask me for?" said his mother.

"But this is poetry, Ma."

"Well, maybe Mr. Slocumbe's father was a plumber, Willie, and Mr. Slocumbe writes about the things he knows about, the way the teacher tells you to."

## CHAPTER IV

ON Sunday every dinner table on the Campus and in the town buzzed with the mysterious disappearance of the Manager of the Bookshop. The bootlegging incident also received a share of attention; but the Game, which was a tie and the one vital topic of conversation elsewhere in New England and the Middle States, here dropped into oblivion prematurely.

"So clever of Patty Farwell," everybody said. "But then, of course, she always is."

The President of the College, Miss Armitage, had invited Miss Carter, the Masfield Professor of Poetry, and Miss Winthrop, the Professor of Comparative Religion, and Dorothy Fentress, the Head of Student Government, and Dr. Thorpe, the Pastor of the Congregational church, to dine with the visiting College Preacher. The Head of Student Government was invited because the visiting College Preacher happened to be her father.

During the soup, Miss Armitage discovered

that Dr. Fentress was less of a pacifist than his daughter and Dr. Thorpe; during the roast chicken, that he was more of a fundamentalist than his daughter and Miss Winthrop; during the salad, that he abhorred free verse and Sherwood Anderson, and was unaware that Miss Carter wrote the one and his daughter read the other. With the desert, a melon mould with a raspberry-sherbet rind and an interior of caramel ice-cream and chopped nuts, the President assumed control of the conversation. With that direct simplicity which so endeared her to her Trustees, chiefly because it was neither so direct nor so simple as they imagined, she said: —

“But I hope you don’t disapprove of detective stories, Dr. Fentress.”

The Head of Student Government threw her a passionately grateful glance; a little sigh of relief ran round the table and culminated in the Masfield Professor of Poetry’s soft chuckle.

“Detective stories!” Dr. Fentress leaned toward Miss Armitage, screening his lips with his hand. “I adore them.”

"Fletcher!" said Miss Armitage.

"Fletcher!" cried Dr. Fentress. "Do you know, I was afraid he was going off; written out; but this last one, *The Secret Way*, — have you read it? You have? Well, well!"

"I understand he is an authority on ecclesiastical law — canon law — something of that sort, in his lighter moments," said Dr. Thorpe.

"Really! Like Lewis Carroll," exclaimed the Professor of Comparative Religion, "except that his was mathematics."

"There's a new man — Cole; did you ever hear of him?" asked Dr. Fentress.

"Oh, yes!" cried Dr. Thorpe, "he's a great social rad—"

"*The Death of a Millionaire*," said the President, eagerly interrupting Dr. Thorpe. "I finished it last night."

"Did you? Did you, really?" Dr. Fentress bent toward his hostess ardently. "What did you think of it? Rather a fresh turn at the end, confusing the villain with the hero? I don't know, I don't know," the Doctor paused, pondering the moral of the story.

"I always go back to Oppenheim," said the Professor of Comparative Religion.

"Do you? Do you, indeed?" Dr. Fentress glowed upon Miss Carter benignantly. "Well, I do too. At his best, I do believe he can't be beat."

"I came across a new man the other day," said the Head of Student Government. "A real thriller. Gaboriau. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Did we ever!" her father cried. And rising from the table with shouts of laughter, the company adjourned to the President's living-room for coffee.

"Perhaps you don't know, Dr. Fentress," said the Masefield Professor of Poetry, refusing cream and sugar, "that we have a mystery story all our own here in Hawthorne."

"Dear Miss Carter, you have written one?" cried the Doctor eagerly. "I must know its name."

"No, no; we are living it. We move in the midst of it even now, at this moment," chuckled Miss Carter. She was a very little



lady, dark-eyed, silver-haired, demure, and mocking.

"At this moment?" Dr. Fentress saw that there was a jest hidden somewhere.

"The President invented it," said Miss Carter.

"I?" protested Miss Armitage.

"Friday evening at a Poet's Reading in our Community Bookshop," continued Miss Carter, and unfolded the tale.

"I can add a little," said Dr. Thorpe, when the Masfield Professor of Poetry paused. "Willie Penfield told his Sunday School teacher this morning that he and his mother found a copy of Slocumbe's *Poems* crushed into the mud where the Ford had been. There was an inscription, 'To —' with the name blotted out by mud, and then a line from 'Disappearance' — something about the Fourth Dimension, he said, and something about raising his voice. Willie could n't remember the words. He wanted to bring the book to Sunday School but his mother would n't let him."

"He wrote lines of verse in a great many

of the books he autographed," said Miss Armitage. "But our students were all on campus when the Ford was smashed, between ten-thirty Friday night when the reading ended and six o'clock Saturday morning when the milkman first saw the Ford. At least, I hope they were," she added. "It looks as if the book were Patty Farwell's. And that would seem to indicate that she went home Friday night before she disappeared."

"I also talked with Traffic Officer Murphy in the Square last night," continued Dr. Thorpe. "The police of course are very keen to track the bootleggers. It seems he was on special traffic duty Friday night in the Square from ten-thirty to twelve-thirty because of the cars going to the Game. He left his house on Emerson Road at ten-fifteen, and when he passed Alcott Street there was no broken-down Ford at the corner, he would swear to that — about ten-twenty or ten-twenty-three. But there was a freight train shunting and slowing up, and he saw a man drop from the bridge to the top of a slow-moving car. Quite a drop. A fool thing to

do. Murphy said, 'I ran for him, but he dropped before I could get my hands on him, and the cars took on speed.' He thinks it was one of the bootlegging gang."

"But the Ford had n't arrived," said the President.

"I know. I could n't get his reasoning. What interested me was that the Bookshop was still lighted up as he came round from the bridge to the turnpike. He said he saw Miss Farwell in the ell \_ room, petting the cat."

"No one else?" inquired the Professor of Comparative Religion.

The Head of Student Government suppressed a giggle.

"I mean —" said the Professor of Comparative Religion.

"No one else," said Dr. Thorpe.

"That would have been about ten-twenty-five," said the President. "I remember looking at my watch just as you and I were leaving the Bookshop, Miss Carter, and it was ten minutes past ten. The Poet was standing on the bridge, and Patty Farwell was stand-

ing in the doorway. At ten-twenty Officer Murphy saw a man drop off the bridge upon a moving freight-train."

"But it is n't the Poet who has disappeared," said Miss Carter. "The Poet has gone to Orange to give a reading to the Orange Woman's Club."

"I'm not drawing conclusions, dear Miss Carter," said Miss Armitage, "I'm only gathering clues."

"It would be the height of absurdity for the Poet to risk his neck by dropping off the bridge," said Miss Carter.

"But it's the height of absurdity for Patty Farwell to disappear," said the Professor of Comparative Religion.

"No, no," the President insisted, "not absurd at all, very clever advertising. But I can add a little more to the story, Dr. Thorpe. I too have been interviewing the police. Our special College policeman, the one who patrols the campus, reported to me yesterday afternoon that he came to the College gate, down the long avenue, on his beat, Friday evening, and stood at the gate for a few minutes looking

out on the turnpike. It was then twenty minutes of eleven, and as he stood there the lights went out in the Bookshop, and Patty Farwell opened the door and came out on the porch. He could see her by the electric light at the corner. She saw him standing under the arch of the gateway, and called across, 'Good night, Mr. Hickory —'

"Hickory?" said Dr. Fentress.

"That's his name," said Miss Armitage. "And then she locked the door and came out on the turnpike. And as she went around on the bridge, a man with a heavy suitcase came toward her over the bridge. Just then the trolley came along, hiding the bridge, and slowed up at the corner but did n't stop; and when it had gone by, Patty Farwell and the man with the suitcase had both disappeared — Patty, over the bridge, of course, but Mr. Hickory could n't be sure whether the man had got on the car when it slowed up, or whether he had gone on down the turnpike. But of course Mr. Hickory did n't think anything about it then. He turned back to the campus and his beat."

"Perhaps the man with the suitcase was the Poet," said the Professor of Comparative Religion.

"Perhaps they both got on the car when it slowed down," said the Head of Student Government. "I often do. Perhaps Miss Farwell trolleyed down to Springfield with him to see him off."

"At twenty minutes to eleven?" said the Professor of Comparative Religion.

"Why not?" said the Head of Student Government. "And perhaps she decided to go on to meet her aunt, — Mrs. Penfield says her aunt's visiting somewhere in western Massachusetts, — and come home with her Tuesday."

"I can't believe she 'd keep it up that long," said the Professor of Comparative Religion. "She has a responsibility toward the Bookshop."

"Oh, I can!" said the President. "Think of the advertising when the papers get hold of it. She must stay away long enough for them to know she's gone."

"I shan't be surprised if both she and her

aunt stay away till after Thanksgiving," said the Masfield Professor of Poetry. "Probably the relatives who are in western Massachusetts wrote urging her to come, and she combined the holiday with the joke."

"In that case, Miss Armitage," said the Head of Student Government, "don't you think I'd better call for volunteers to keep the Bookshop open Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday? Lots of the girls would sign up, I'm sure."

"The President of the Bank was speaking to me about that after service this morning," said Dr. Thorpe. "He thinks the disappearance is good advertising, but he feels that the shop ought to be kept open to capture the increased sales. You see, Dr. Fentress, the Bookshop is a community affair."

"I see," laughed Dr. Fentress.

"The President of the Woman's Club thought she could form a committee to help in the shop if the disappearance was prolonged," Dr. Thorpe added.

"Suppose we see what happens to-morrow,"



said Miss Armitage. "We may find the shop open at nine."

"Still, it seems a pity to sit with our hands folded," said Miss Carter. "We ought to do something to show Patty Farwell that we appreciate her joke."

"It's really delightful," said Dr. Fentress; "the sort of thing the English universities call a rag, eh, Thorpe?"

"Exactly!" said Dr. Thorpe.

"We might invoke the power of the press," said Miss Carter. "We might put a notice in the *Transcript*, in the Lost and Found column."

"Or in the *Springfield Republican*, if she's gone in that direction," said Miss Winthrop.

"Something like this," said Miss Carter: "Lost, in the Fourth Dimension, the night before the Football Game, One Community Bookshop Manager. Radios please broadcast."

"Oh, let me put it in the *Times*, when I get to New York, to-morrow morning," cried Dr. Fentress.

“Do !” said Miss Carter. “Then the Poet will see it before he goes to Orange.”

“We shall have the reporters flocking, by to-morrow, anyhow,” said the President of the College. “I do hope she will stay away one more day. So much better tactics.”

## CHAPTER V

THE Manager of the Bookshop evidently agreed with the President of the College, for the shop was still closed on Monday morning. At nine o'clock Bibelot sat in the window at the right of the door, washing her face and gazing out upon three hundred college students, fifty villagers, thirty-seven motorists pausing in transit, and five newspaper reporters.

"Who feeds the cat?" asked one of the reporters.

"Willie Penfield," said a student.

"Who's Willie Penfield?"

"The boy that takes care of the furnace. Miss Farwell rents an apartment in his mother's house."

"Oh, then she has a key?"

No one answered this question. A gentleman with an indefinable air of authority was going up on the porch. He had a square of

white cardboard in one hand and a hammer and a package of tacks in the other. Deliberately, and with a tranquil unconsciousness of the three hundred and ninety-two spectators and the cat, he tacked the square of white cardboard upon the shop door.

"Who's that?" asked the reporter.

"The President of the Bank," said the student.

"You know Miss Farwell," said the reporter. "Describe her."

"I'd like to awfully well, but I guess you'd better go to the Head of College Publicity," said the student discreetly.

The President of the Bank came down from the porch and was taken in charge by a reporter. Another reporter had already started across the bridge to the Penfield apartment house. A third paused long enough to read the placard on the shop door, and then crossed the road and went through the College gate on his way to interview the President of the College. A fourth inquired his way to police headquarters, and the fifth lingered on the porch till the crowd had dispersed and the

one policeman detailed to guard the house was ready to be communicative.

The placard announced that the Bookshop would open as usual after the Thanksgiving recess.

"Of course," said the policeman to the reporter, "it 'll open earlier if the young lady turns up. But they thought it was better not to have a crowd hangin' round all the time waitin' for the door to open."

"You think it's a joke, do you?" said the reporter.

"Oh, it's a joke all right," said the policeman. "Ain't this a college town?"

The evening papers gave full publicity to Patty Farwell's "alleged" disappearance. One of them printed an editorial on college jokes, beginning with the painting of John Harvard red. The largest paper in New England ran a five-column article on the Cult of the Bookshop, with pertinent discussion of the tea-bookshop, the book-curio-shop, the book-shop-as-forum, the coöperative bookshop, bookshops old and new compared, etc., etc., illustrated by a full page of cuts:

## INTO THE VOID

---

1. Upper left: The Hampshire Bookshop, Northampton
2. Upper right: The Hathaway House Bookshop, Wellesley
3. Centre oval: The Community Bookshop, Hawthorne, with Bibelot in the window, the cat who knows and won't tell
4. Lower left: The Dunster House Bookshop, Cambridge
5. Lower circle: The Peterboro Bookshop with distinguished members of the MacDowell Colony buying books
6. Lower right: The Sunwise Turn, New York City

All the papers printed the Poet's picture, and such lines of his poem, "Disappearance," as could be salvaged from the autographed copies of his *Poems* owned by students. The more sensational journals emphasized the disappearance rather than the Bookshop. One of them printed an informative article on mysterious disappearances, beginning with the kidnapping of Charlie Ross. Several papers hinted, not too seriously, that it might not be a joke after all. These showed a tendency to connect the disappearance with the bootlegging incident. One enterprising daily offered a prize of fifty dollars for the cleverest guess at the solution of the mystery,

guesses not to exceed three hundred words in length.

On Tuesday, Patty Farwell's great-aunt, Miss Patience Farwell, came home. She was a small, bright-eyed, white-haired old lady, of a crisp and optimistic temperament, and she was in fine fettle. She had seen a Monday evening paper, and knew all about the joke. It seemed to her a very good joke indeed. So clever of Patty. But then, Patty always was clever.

"But, you know, she has n't come back yet," said Mrs. Penfield, who had taken pains to be on hand to help the old lady off with her hat and coat. "We felt sure she 'd never go off like that without sending you word."

"Oh, she's probably left a note for me, somewhere," said Miss Patience.

But there was no note. Mrs. Penfield moved out the bureau in Miss Farwell's bedroom to make sure that nothing had fallen behind. Nothing in the kitchenette; nothing in the bathroom; nothing in Patty's own room.

"I cleaned the whole place while you was



gone," said Mrs. Penfield. "If there 'd been a note I 'd have seen it."

"I hope she wore her fur coat," said Miss Farwell. So they looked in the coat closet.

The fur coat was gone, and the little fawn-colored velours hat.

"She wore them over to the Bookshop Friday night for the Poet's reading, Miss Farwell," said Mrs. Penfield. "And her dull blue crêpe de Chine."

Yes, the dull blue crêpe de Chine was gone.

"And her new slippers," said Miss Farwell.

"New slippers!" cried Mrs. Penfield. "Did she have a new pair of slippers? Think of me not knowing that!"

Miss Farwell smiled to herself. "I'm as surprised as you are, Mrs. Penfield," she said.

"Then do you suppose that slipper they found —?"

"Yes; I recognized it from the description in the paper. And I thought how clever of her to put it right there in the middle of the road. But how extravagant! Just like Patty."

"Still, it don't seem like her not to let you know, Miss Farwell." Mrs. Penfield, deprived of the pleasure of breaking the shock to her tenant, was beginning to find the old lady's complacency irritating.

"Oh, she probably thought it was n't worth while writing me before I got home," said Miss Farwell. "I'll hear to-night or to-morrow morning. I may get a night letter. Or she may appear this evening."

"Well, I hope so," said Mrs. Penfield, and pursed up her lips.

Then the doorbell rang and Traffic Officer Murphy was discovered on the threshold with the brown suède slipper in his hand.

"The station agent telephoned over to police headquarters that Miss Farwell came in on the two-five. I thought I'd just drop over and have a little talk with her." He lowered his voice: "How's she takin' it? Good deal of a shock for an old lady, if she was n't warned."

"Shock, nothin'!" said Mrs. Penfield. "These modern old ladies is shock-proof." And she ushered the Traffic Officer into the

living-room. "Here's Officer Murphy wants to see you, Miss Farwell," she said.

"Oh, Mr. Murphy, you've brought back my niece's slipper. How kind of you," said Miss Farwell.

"Then it is hers, ma'am. You're sure?" said Officer Murphy. "Well, that's that. Now I wonder if you'd mind me asking a few questions, Miss Farwell; for while we all thinks this is just a joke, — a rag I believe Dr. Thorpe is calling it, though why rag I don't see, — still the police always have to take everything into consideration, and there's complicating circumstances here, without a doubt. Not that I'd let them worry me, not for a minute I would n't. No, Miss Farwell, not for a minute."

"Oh, I'm not worrying," said the old lady, cheerily. "Time enough if she does n't come home. And she will come home. I'm sure of that. The dear Lord would n't let anything happen to my Patty."

"And the police'll do their part. You can bank on that, ma'am," said Officer Murphy.

"Now, Mrs. Penfield," said Miss Farwell,

"I've kept you too long already, bothering over my troubles. I know how busy you are. Don't stay. It's such a comfort to me to know that I can knock any time on the bathroom wall and you'll hear. Thank you so much."

And presently Officer Murphy and Miss Farwell were sitting tête-à-tête, with the brown suède shoe on a hassock between them.

"You say she was wearing a fur coat — a yellow leopard-skin fur jacket with a beaver collar, Miss Farwell?" said Officer Murphy. "I've never seen Miss Patty cross the Square in a leopard-skin fur jacket. I know everybody's fur coat in this town."

"It was her new coat," said Miss Farwell. "A birthday present from me. She had n't worn it before. And the hat was new too."

"Now where have I seen somebody in a tan velours hat — fawn-colored, did you call it? — and a leopard-skin jacket with a beaver collar?" mused Officer Murphy. Suddenly his eyes seemed to leap in his head, and he opened his mouth to speak, sat with it open for a second, and shut it again, silently.

Miss Farwell was sitting in her rocking chair, placidly looking at her niece's suède slipper on the hassock. She had n't noticed. Officer Murphy sank into deep thought. When he spoke again his voice was gentle and cautious.

"You know, Miss Farwell," he said, "if by any chance Miss Patty should n't come home to-day or to-morrow or Thanksgiving, we 'd ought to be ready to do something about it."

The old lady lifted her eyes from the slipper and fixed them upon the Traffic Officer. Something in his tone arrested her.

"What I suggest," he went on, "is that you let me start making inquiries about a young lady in a leopard-skin coat and a fawn-colored velours hat. Of course, the police have n't time to waste on jokes; we 've got enough to do huntin' for hooch and bootleggers; but if you notify us that your niece is lost and you want us to hunt for her — why, we 'll start huntin'." He paused, and she still regarded him attentively. "It 's only," he added, "if it was my niece I would n't take any chances

on its being a joke. Not after three days, I would n't."

"I think you're very kind, Mr. Murphy," said Miss Farwell, "and very sensible. I wish you'd do what you think best. But you do think it's a joke, don't you?"

"Well, it'll sure be a joke on us if it is n't a joke, now won't it, Miss Farwell?" he retorted gayly. "But don't you let it be worrying you. Just you keep me posted and I'll keep you posted. And if we can find Miss Patty before she comes home, we'll have the laugh on her, and that'll be the best joke of all."

Then Officer Murphy let himself out of the front door and, finding that he had twenty minutes to spare before he must relieve Officer Meeker of traffic duty in the Square, he went over to the Congregational church and was so fortunate as to find Dr. Thorpe in his study. Dr. Thorpe listened to his story with some perplexity.

"You mean you think this is n't a joke after all, Murphy? But that seems even more absurd than if it were."

“Well, all I know, Doctor, I ’d been wig-waggin’ the traffic in that there pulpit of ours in the Square, about half an hour,” said Officer Murphy. “The church clock had rungeleven, I remember that, and I was holding up the traffic that was headed north and south so the taxis and cars from the station could cross, and the foot passengers. And the front car in the line waiting to go south on the turnpike was a Pierce-Arrow, a fine car, and an old gentleman driving. I thought to myself, ‘You ’re a bit ancient, old fellow, to be out on a night like this’; looked like the owner, not a chauffeur; and one of these collapsible canvas tents strapped on the running board; and the fender was bent and there was a deep dent in the radiator; and I says to myself, ‘You ’ve had a close shave, you have; a little more and you ’d have busted your radiator.’ And then I saw there was two women in back, an oldish lady with a pleasant face, and she had her arm around another lady that was leaning against her shoulder. The car was right in the spotlight, you understand. And the other one’s face was hid and she had a white



cloth or a man's handkerchief or something wrapped around her head, and a fawn-colored velours hat sorter laid on top to keep the light out or to protect the top of her head. And that was the one that had on the leopard-skin coat with a beaver collar. And when old Miss Farwell says to me, a leopard-skin jacket, I could n't think for a minute what it reminded me of. And then all of a sudden I remembered."

"You did n't question the driver of the limousine?"

"Why, no; what would I do that for? I thought they must want to get the lady home to bed, and I held up the east and west traffic and let the north and south go through. And the gentleman at the wheel, he nodded 'thank you,' as he passed. There were suitcases in the car and a tea basket, and the license number was from Maine. Lots of these Maine and New Hampshire and Vermont folks going through to Florida about now."

"But it's too fantastic, it's simply too fantastic," said Dr. Thorpe. "A pleasant-faced

old lady and old gentleman in a Pierce-Arrow from Maine."

"Well," said Officer Murphy, "it's my experience anything might happen the night before the Game. All I say is, there was a leopard-skin jacket with a beaver collar and a fawn-colored velours hat in that car. And you being the old Miss Farwell's pastor, Doctor, I thought you'd be the one to tell her what I've told you. In that cheerful bright way you have, so's not to alarm her in case it didn't mean anything after all. Though I will say, she's that calm, it'd take a Japanese earthquake to shake her."

"I'll go right up to see her, Murphy; thank you. And what are you going to do about it?"

"I'm going to start an inquiry for a Pierce-Arrow car with a collapsible tent on the running board, a bent fender, a dented radiator, and a lady inside with a leopard-skin jacket. But you see, Doctor, they've got four days' start on us. They might be going to Florida, or they might be going to strike the Lincoln Highway for California."

"Or they might store the car and the collapsible tent in New York and sail for Europe," said Dr. Thorpe.

"Or Panama," said Officer Murphy.

"Or the Fourth Dimension," said Dr. Thorpe.

## CHAPTER VI

WEDNESDAY morning, the Masefield Professor of Poetry took an unprecedented step. She interrupted President Armitage's Office Hours for Freshmen.

"No; I have n't an appointment," she said to the President's private secretary, "but I lecture the next hour, and —" she had a letter in her hand.

"Of course, Miss Carter," said the President's private secretary, and ushered her past the waiting line of freshmen, who did n't look too pleased, for the Thanksgiving recess began at noon and everyone who could was catching the ten-thirty express.

The Masefield Professor of Poetry handed the President of the College the letter.

"From Orange!" said Miss Armitage, glancing at the postmark. And read: —

Dear Miss Carter, —

A record audience turned out yesterday for your poet. I had read your letter about him at our

last business meeting, and the Club was eager to see and hear him. And he never came. No letter; no telegram. And nearly everybody had brought a copy of his poems to be autographed. As they say in the English novels, "It really was a bit thick." I'm writing you because we all think you'll want to warn the next club to which you recommend him, that he may not turn up.

My husband said last night that there was some joke in the *Times* about the disappearance of the Community Bookshop Manager in Hawthorne after Mr. Slocumbe's reading. If she has eloped with the poet, I suppose we shall have to forgive him. But you can tell him from me that Orange would have been an ideal place for a honeymoon. Now, however, I've torn up the cheque.

It does n't seem to me that poets and other young people were quite as irresponsible ten years ago, when I was just out of college. Please say we were n't.

Always your affectionate student,

BERTHA GAGE

"Both of them!" exclaimed Miss Armitage. "You don't suppose she met him on the bridge, and they did elope?"

"Of course, she might," sighed Miss Carter, "but she never laid eyes on him till Friday afternoon. It does seem a little swift, even for this generation."

"Well, I shall give them till the day after to-morrow," said Miss Armitage in her calm, decisive way, "the day after Thanksgiving. Then, if they don't turn up, I shall begin to take it seriously. You don't think dear old Miss Farwell knows something and is sworn to secrecy?"

"No, I don't. I went over to see her last evening and she was as tranquil as a summer noon. Dr. Thorpe had been with her before dinner and broken it to her about the girl in the leopard-skin jacket. When I said good-bye, she patted my hand and said, 'I'm not worrying, Miss Carter; the dear Lord won't let my Patty come to harm.'"

"That 's what it is to have real old-fashioned Christian trust," said Miss Armitage.

"And no imagination," said Miss Carter. "I've been thinking of telephoning Traffic Officer Murphy at the police station and finding out just what he has to say about the man

who dropped off the railroad bridge upon a freight train Friday night."

"That was before Patty Farwell left the shop," said Miss Armitage.

"Yes, I know," said Miss Carter dryly, "but she may have taken that trolley to the next station and joined him, and gone the rest of the way by freight."

"The rest of the way?" queried Miss Armitage.

"Into the Fourth Dimension. But I'm taking your time," said Miss Carter, and went away to lecture to her class on the Post-Imagist School, and to telephone the police station.

At three-fifteen Officer Murphy, very trig and upstanding, with his white belt crisscrossed on his broad chest and his white wigwag gloves carried negligently in his left hand, presented himself at Ponsonby Hall, the dormitory in which the Masfield Professor of Poetry had her apartment, and was ushered into Miss Carter's sitting-room.

"Oh, no, Miss Carter," said Officer Murphy, when the conversation had got under way,



“I did n’t say he dropped off the bridge — that is, not off the *bridge*, you understand. You ’ve only to go down and look over the top of the railing that ’s really a board fence built breast-high on both sides of the bridge and not a railing at all, and you ’ll see how next to impossible it would be to drop on to a moving train from that height, unless you started off to commit suicide in the first place. For when you ’d climbed the fence, — that ’s breast-high, you ’ll remember, — you would n’t have anything on the other side to brace your toes against. You ’d just be hanging by your fingers with your face skinned against the tall boards of the fence, and you would n’t be able to tell about the train going by underneath you, nor gauge your drop, nor nothing. A ten- or twelve-foot drop, that would be. No. Is n’t it queer the way testimony gets mixed? Now here ’s Dr. Thorpe: would n’t tell a lie, not if you burnt him at the stake, but look how he got twisted. What I meant when I said a man got on to the moving freight from the bridge was this way: You know how those stone piers are built, the bridge rests

on; you can walk up them from block of stone to block of stone like steps, from the bed of the tracks, against the embankment.”

“Like walking up the Pyramids — yes,” said Miss Carter.

“That so?” said Officer Murphy. “Well, that fella that boarded the freight was climbin’ down those stone steps when I first saw him, and when the freight come along, that had been whistlin’ and shuntin’ further down the track, he was just on a level with the top of the cars, and he give a little jump and landed on his knees. And there was a funny thing happened, Miss Carter; I laughed all the way across the bridge. The wind was blowing that night, maybe you don’t remember, and it was blowing against the freight; and it was a mixed freight; that is, it was n’t all Standard Oil tanks, nor all Armour refrigerator cars, nor all coal cars; it was mixed. And the car that fella lit on was the middle one of three cars of pigs. And he never knew it till he lit, because the wind was blowing against the freight. And I run and leaned over the top rail of the bridge to see him go by, from

under, and he says, very loud and startled, 'Hell! What a smell!' Just like that. And I was so tickled I doubled up on the bridge and laughed till I was sore."

"But what makes you think it was the Poet, Mr. Murphy?" asked Miss Carter.

"Well, I did n't — not right then, of course. But when I heard about the disappearance, and the joke, and then you telephoning this afternoon, I said to Cap'n Torrey at the police station, 'What'll you bet that fella that boarded the freight was n't the Poet?' 'Hell, what a smell,' Miss Carter — it rhymes."

"But Mr. Murphy," said Miss Carter when she had got the better of her chuckle, "it happens that Mr. Slocumbe does n't rhyme. He does n't believe in rhyme."

"A poet?" said Officer Murphy. "But don't that seem against nature, Miss Carter? All I can say is, I believe that rhyme was jolted out of him when he was off his guard."

"Your reasoning does seem conclusive, Mr. Murphy," Miss Carter agreed. "I hope you'll follow it up and let me know what

more you find out about the man on the freight car. I 'm writing now to his sister in Colorado. She may have had some word from him."

So Traffic Officer Murphy took his leave, and as he had still fifteen minutes' leisure before he need relieve Officer Meeker at the Square, he went down to the railway station and made some inquiries about the freight that went through at ten-twenty-five Friday night, and stimulated the station master's curiosity to such good effect that a number of telegrams were sent down the line.

"And I 'm more and more sure now," said Traffic Officer Murphy, "that the man with the suitcase that Hickory saw coming over the bridge at ten-forty was n't the Poet at all, but the bootlegger — the way I dope it out."

"Talking about suitcases," said the station master, "there 's one been here nearly a week now. These college girls are sure the limit. One of them left an umbrella here a month — a tortoise-shell handle it had, and blue silk. And another one left three victrola records and never came back for them: 'Sextette

from Lucia,' and music for the Daily Dozen, and 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot.'"

"This suitcase was n't left by a girl," said the baggage master. "It was left here Friday afternoon by a young swell. Said he 'd call for it. Taking the midnight. But he ain't called yet."

"Say, Phil, let me see that suitcase, will you?" said Officer Murphy.

"Sure," said the baggage master.

It was a black patent-leather suitcase, very neat and proper, with P. S. in small white letters on one end.

"S stands for Slocumbe," said Officer Murphy. "What say we open her up?" Which he did quite easily, for she was n't locked. And inside there was a letter addressed to Paul Slocumbe, postmarked Orange, New Jersey. "Him all right," said Officer Murphy. And a business suit and pajamas and other necessities. "Looks like he went off with the pigs in his Tux-e-do, don't it?" said Officer Murphy. "The man on the freight had an overcoat, I noticed. What time did you say this came in, Phil?"

"About four o'clock Friday afternoon."

"Then it could n't be the suitcase the man was carrying that Hickory saw coming over the bridge at ten-forty Friday night."

The telegraph ticked and the station master turned to the instrument and presently showed signs of great excitement.

"Hey, boys!" said he. "Albany says an overcoat has been turned in from a box car. What say?"

"Tell 'em to send it back and we'll take care of it," said Officer Murphy. "We've got a regular museum at headquarters. When we get the fawn-colored velours hat and the leopard-skin jacket, we'll have a complete trousseau."

## CHAPTER VII

THANKSGIVING morning, at half past seven, Mrs. Penfield was horrified to discover her son still asleep in his bed.

"Willie, Willie!" she cried, snapping up the window shade and slamming down the sash. "You 've been later and later every day this week. Do you know the thermometer 's only four above? You 'll have that Bookshop furnace going out on you, first thing you know. Get right up." And seizing the bed-clothes with a ruthless hand, she flung them back over the footboard.

"Oh, Ma, don't!" yelled Willie, making a vain plunge after the blankets. "I let the furnace go out night before last."

"You let —" Mrs. Penfield gaped at her Boy Scout, unable to believe her ears.

"Why, the old place was n't open," grumbled Willie, dangling disconsolate cold toes over the edge of the bed. "I thought they 'd be glad to save coal."



"Willie Penfield!" shrieked his mother. "And you the son of a plumber! I would n't wonder if every pipe in the house is n't bursted. Here — here 's your pants. Never mind washing your face. Did you cut off the water? No, I 'll bet you did n't. Now you get right out and cut that water off and build that fire. What 'll Miss Patty say to you when she comes home and finds you 've froze Bibi to death?"

Fuming and grumbling, Willie hurried into his clothes and ran for the Bookshop. Fifteen minutes later his voice quavered over the telephone wire: —

"Ma — say! There 's three leaks in the water pipes."

"Willie, did you cut off the water?"

"I can't find the cut-off. It ain't in the same place where ours is. But I 've built up a fine fire."

"And the pipes 'll thaw and flood the place. Willie!"

Hanging up the telephone, Mrs. Penfield roused her husband from his holiday slumbers and set the coffee on to boil. In ten minutes

Willie rang up again. He spoke in a loud stage whisper, lugubriously : —

“Ma, when ’s Pa coming over? I ’ve found something awful in the cellar.” He paused. “Something awful,” he repeated solemnly. Then he rang off.

“Joe, Joe!” cried Mrs. Penfield, pounding on the bathroom door. “Willie ’s found a corpse or something in the Bookshop cellar. Hurry !”

“My God !” said Joe Penfield, bursting out of the bathroom. “If it has to be one of them, I hope it ’s that Poet, for the old lady’s sake.”

“I ’m coming too,” said Mrs. Penfield.

“No, you ’re not,” her husband retorted firmly. “What ’s that boiling over on the stove? You ’re going to stay right here and break it to the old lady.”

“Well, I suppose so,” sighed Mrs. Penfield. “Here — drink this.” Pouring out the portion of the coffee that had n’t boiled over, she thrust it upon him, and then stood at the window watching him sprint up the road.

The sound of water dripping met his ear as

he opened the door of the old red house, and he saw that Willie had put a bucket under a leak in the small lavatory at the end of the front hall. Willie, waiting for him in the dusk at the foot of the cellar stairs, beckoned silently, and Joe Penfield, tiptoeing cautiously after his tiptoeing son, penetrated to the darkest regions of the old cellar. Against the cellar wall Willie paused and knelt before what seemed to be a longish box covered with sacking. Willie lifted the sacking and the lid, and murmured in his father's ear: —

“Put your hand in and feel.”

It was a horrid moment for Joe Penfield. But what his son had done he must not seem to shrink from doing. Gingerly his hand groped downward and encountered something unbelievably cold — and smooth — and curved — an arm? — a frozen human arm? Joe Penfield's flesh crept as he lifted the thing out of the box.

“There's twelve of them,” murmured Willie. “I counted.”

Then something smashed and splintered, and an aroma floated on the cold air. Joe

Penfield had poured a libation to the god of Fear.

"You told your mother it was a corpse," he raged, his teeth still chattering; and he cuffed Willie's ears with unerring aim in the darkness.

"I never!" cried Willie, astounded. "I never!"

"Get out of here!" shouted his father. "Go home and bring me my electric torch and my small kit of tools, and tell your mother. Look where you're stepping; don't get in the glass."

From the head of the cellar stairs Willie called: "Pa, shall I telephone the police?"

"I'll 'tend to the telephoning," said his father. "What you and your ma will do is to keep your mouths tight shut. Both of you. Now mind! If Cap'n Torrey finds you've talked and given anything away to boys, or reporters, or *anybody*, like as not he'll lock you up for a month. And I'll let him."

Upstairs the front door banged, and in the cellar Joe Penfield got off his knees and moved

from darkness into the twilight zone, looking for the water cock. He found it just where any plumber would expect to find it, and apostrophized his son as he turned off the water. Going next to the upper floors, where Bibi joined him, he investigated the pipes, found the three breaks, and, being helpless without his tools, called up the police station on the telephone. Captain Torrey was not there at the moment, but Officer Meeker said he would call up Officer Murphy, who was due to show up at the police station in three quarters of an hour, and tell him to stop in at the Bookshop on his way down.

"Nothin' pressin', you say, Joe?"

"Nope."

"Robbery?"

"Nope."

"What you doin' there?"

"My boy runs the furnace, and he found the water pipes busted this morning."

"I see. Well, if Murphy gets there within an hour, that be all right? This is Thanksgiving Day, you know, Joe."

"Well, I guess I damn right well know.

I 'm spendin' it here mendin' three rotten water-pipes. These old houses ! It don't make no difference to me when Murphy comes ; I ain't leavin' in a hurry."

Then he called up the President of the Bank, Alpheus Barker Whittemore.

"That Mr. Whittemore? This is Joe Penfield, the plumber. Plumber — yes. I understand you 're on the Board of Directors of the Community Bookshop. Chairman of the Board? Well, Mr. Whittemore, the cold weather has froze these old water-pipes at the Bookshop — Me? — I 'm at the Bookshop — Why, you see, my boy takes care of the furnace and this morning when he came over — Well, it 's an old house, Mr. Whittemore — You could n't step over and see for yourself? I 'd feel better about it if somebody that was responsible just came in to have a look — That 'll be fine ! I ain't had my breakfast yet, but if you 'll come right along I 'll wait till you get here."

The front door opened and he went into the hall to find Willie, a chastened Willie, with the small tool-kit in one hand, a tin bucket of

breakfast in the other, and the electric torch in his pocket.

"Don't you want me to hold the tools for you, Pa?" he pleaded.

"No, I don't. Do you know where that cut-off was? Well, come and look." Seizing his son firmly, though gently, by the ear, Joe Penfield led him down the cellar stairs and showed him the water cock. "If it 'd been a bear it would have bit you."

"But then I might n't have found the hooch," said Willie. "I think I 'd rather be a detective anyway than a plumber." And he fled up the cellar stairs, leaving his father alone with eleven temptations.

Carefully avoiding the broken glass and the shallow puddle of liquor which had formed in a depression of the old cellar floor, the plumber flashed his electric torch into the box and stared reflectively at the eleven bottles disclosed within. Then he began to lift them out, one by one, and to lay them side by side on the cellar floor. Easy as fiddle to snap off the neck of one. On the edge of the box. By accident. He hesitated. His hand shook;



steadied. He laid the bottle carefully down on the cellar floor. He laid all the eleven bottles carefully down on the cellar floor. He sighed. He felt in the box. Empty. He sat back on his heels and surveyed the layout on the floor. And sighed again. Turning his reflective gaze upon the puddle, he meditated. Joe Penfield's mouth was wistful in repose. Stretching forth a muscular, unwashed hand, he dipped two tentative fingers into the puddle and conveyed them dripping to his wistful mouth. "M', M'h!" He stretched forth his hand a second time — and thought of Willie, who was a Boy Scout. He thought of his wife — and his breath. He drew back his hand and wiped his fingers on his pants. He continued to sit back on his heels, staring hypnotically at the eleven bottles. "Dammit, why don't they come?" he said.

Five minutes later he heard Alpheus Whittemore whirl up to the door in his car.

"I'm down here," called Penfield. "We've found something in the cellar."

"Something in the cellar?" gasped the banker, and hurried down the cellar stairs.

Guided by the electric torch, he made his way to the plumber's side, and gasped again.

"They were in that box against the wall," said Joe Penfield. "I took 'em out to see how many there were."

"Looks as if somebody 'd been using the place for a cache," said Whittemore. "Or they may be little Miss Patty's."

"Miss Patty's!" The plumber was horror-struck.

"Well, her aunt 's an old lady. The doctor may prescribe it."

"Her aunt's a teetotaler. Used to be president of a temperance society before the law was passed."

The President of the Bank drew off his motoring gloves and dipped one long, clean, white finger into the little puddle. He touched the tip of his finger to the tip of his tongue, delicately. "Tastes like good stuff," he said. "But you never can tell. I don't take any risks these days, unless I know where it comes from."

"I never thought of that," said the plumber.

"You have n't drunk any of it?" cried the President of the Bank.

"No more than you."

Mr. Whittemore regarded his own fingers and Joe Penfield's and the puddle thoughtfully. "What about these leaks?" he asked.

"There 's three."

"It looks as if this were going to be a costly jest," said Mr. Whittemore. "How much are we in for?"

"Well, you see, Mr. Whittemore," said Joe Penfield, rising to his loose-jointed ungainly height, and shifting from one foot to the other in some embarrassment, "it 's like this. My boy meant well. He thought he was saving coal for you folks, so he let the furnace go out. And of course in an old house like this — so I 'm not planning to send you in a bill."

"No bill!" cried the President of the Bank. "Oh, but — oh, but — look here, Penfield, I can't have you do that, you know. The Directors stand ready to back this enterprise, and there are bound to be accidents."

"This was n't no accident," cried Joe Pen-

field. "It was just damn-fool stupid. All this here talk about heridity and evolution! And then my boy ain't got any more instinct for water pipes than to let a furnace go out on him when the thermometer stands at four above! I tell you what, Mr. Whittemore, this is a college town and I make my livin' in it, and I have n't got any kick comin' against the college professors; they're kind-hearted — some of 'em — and harmless. But when it comes to real thinkin' — fundamentalism and heridity and all that dope — give me good old William J. Bryan every time."

"Well, I declare," said the President of the Bank, "when I see the way my boy acts sometimes, I can sympathize with you." And he laughed. "But you must send us that bill just the same."

"Now look a' here, Mr. Whittemore." Joe Penfield's voice was suddenly harsh, with a little catch in it. "If this Bookshop's the Community Bookshop and my boy's burst the pipes, I've as good a right to meet the bill as you. It's my Bookshop as much as it is yours."

"You win," said the President of the Bank, grasping the plumber's hand and shaking it heartily. "By George, I wish I had you on the Bookshop's Board of Directors. Now I must skip. My youngsters are waiting for me to take them out skating."

But Traffic Officer Murphy was descending the cellar stairs. "Well, Mr. Whittemore," he said, "you'll remember I warned you three days ago there ought to be a private watchman on this place while all this excitement's going on. What's the joke now — books disappeared?"

"It's not a disappearance this time, Murphy," laughed the President of the Bank, "it's a materialization."

"A what?" said the Traffic Officer.

"Spirits," said the President of the Bank, and he indicated the eleven bottles and the puddle.

But there was n't any puddle. Bibi, with glassy eyes, looked up from a damp spot that she had been licking, gave a slight lurch, and went to sleep.

For some unexpressed reason the Traffic

Officer, the plumber, and the President of the Bank, all three, found this episode infinitely amusing. The cellar echoed with their wild peals of laughter. Bibi opened her eyes, as green as glass, regarded them reproachfully, and again fell asleep. It set them off louder than ever.

"I hope it ain't poison," said the plumber, when he could speak. "I could n't face Miss Patty if anything happened to Bibelot."

"Bibbler?" said the President of the Bank. "Don't tell me this cat's name is Bibbler," and went off again into gales of laughter.

"Well, I never thought — but that is its name!" cried Joe Penfield, too amazed to laugh.

"Say!" said Officer Murphy. "You don't suppose that girl, with her innocent eyes, and her little ways of windin' you round her finger, so sweet butter would n't melt in her mouth — you don't suppose she 's a fence?"

"No!" shouted the President of the Bank, on the verge of hysterics. "I don't suppose any such preposterous thing."

"Well, there was her slipper in the middle

of the road by that bootlegger's Ford," pursued Officer Murphy. "And now here 's the twelve bottles that was missing from that other lot, in her cellar; and the cat's name and all."

"It 'd be an awful shock to the old lady," said Joe Penfield. "I would n't want to be the one to break it to her."

"You forget," said the President of the Bank, blowing his nose and staunching his tears. "You forget; this is a joke."

"This?" said Officer Murphy, recovering his official dignity and pointing to the eleven bottles of hooch. "Well, I 'll tell you right now, Mr. Whittemore, Cap'n Torrey at police headquarters has a mighty poor sense of humor when it comes to bootleggin'. Where 's your telephone, Joe? I got to get somebody up to help me with a basket or a suitcase or something. I can't go through the streets with eleven bottles of liquor under my arm."

"I 'll take you down in my car," said the President of the Bank. "Here, give me some of those bottles."

And Joe Penfield was left to mend the leaks.



## CHAPTER VIII

THE President of the Bank, as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Community Bookshop, called a meeting extraordinary (the adjective is parliamentary and technical) of the Board for Friday evening at the Bookshop. Dr. Thorpe took down the minutes. The other members present were Miss Armitage and Miss Carter, for the College; Mrs. Matthews, the President of the Woman's Club; Mr. Valentine, the Master of the Boy Scouts; Miss Chesterfield, the Principal of the well-known Girls' Preparatory School; and Mr. Estes, the eminent Corporation Lawyer.

The Chairman called the meeting to order, and, "I do not need to remind you," said he, "that it is just one week to-night since the unprecedented events occurred which have kept our little community guessing ever since. Now I think we have all had a good deal of enjoyment out of the joke, but my question is, Have n't we had enough?"

"Is n't there also another question?" said the Masfield Professor of Poetry. "Is it a joke?"

"But, you know," said the Chairman, "if it is n't a joke, Miss Carter, it may be —" he hesitated.

"A tragedy," said Miss Carter gently.

"Oh, no!" expostulated Miss Chesterfield. "Impossible! We must n't think it for a minute."

"If one tragedy, why not two?" said Mr. Estes. His voice was sober but his eye twinkled.

"But that sort of coincidence only happens in detective novels, not in real life," said Mrs. Matthews.

"No?" said Mr. Estes genially.

There was an uneasy pause. Then Miss Armitage at her dryest said, "Whether it is a joke or a tragedy, I agree with the Chairman that we have had enough."

"If there 's anything my Scouts can do —" said Mr. Valentine.

"Perhaps if we have a motion before the Board —" suggested the Chairman.

And Miss Carter obliged with: "I move that disappearances into the Fourth Dimension be taken seriously."

Every face flickered with a little grimace of self-control — some instantly, others after the briefest bewildered interval.

"Is this motion seconded?" said the Chairman. His voice shook, ever so slightly, but his parliamentary procedure was above reproach.

"Second the motion," said Mr. Estes, passing his hand across his lips.

"It is moved and seconded," said the Chairman, "that disappearances into the Fourth Dimension be taken seriously. Are there any remarks? Would it seem wiser to limit the motion to specific disappearances? An amendment?"

"Miss Carter seems to have covered the case," remarked Miss Armitage.

There was a cautious pause.

"In order that we may discuss the motion with all the facts before us," said the Chairman, "I am going to ask Dr. Thorpe, who has been in consultation with the police for Miss Patience Farwell, — the Manager-of-our-

Bookshop's great-aunt, — to bring the disappearances up to date. Dr. Thorpe?"

"Mr. Chairman." The Pastor of the Congregational church had a brisk manner and a crisp utterance. As always, when he spoke at any great length, he tipped his chin up a little, and his head back, not too far. His eyes rested on the map of the Never-Never Land which decorated that portion of the Bookshop's burlap frieze above the bookshelves behind the head of the President of the Bank. "Mr. Chairman: If my memory serves, the events which, as you so pertinently remark, have kept us guessing for a week, had their inception in a poem entitled 'Disappearance,' read by Mr. Slocumbe on the Friday evening preceding the Ball Game, at our Community Bookshop, before a large and representative Hawthorne audience. Let me say that interruptions and corrections from the Board will be welcomed, if I have n't the facts accurately. This poem, which struck the modern scientific note with a delicately mystical touch, inspired the President of the College to suggest that if Mr. Slocumbe should

exercise his peculiar gift and really disappear into the Fourth Dimension, not like the gentleman in the Bab Ballad, but clothes and all, — I am right, am I not, Miss Armitage? — it would be an excellent advertisement for the Bookshop.”

“The experiment was not wholly successful,” amended the Masfield Professor of Poetry, “for I understand that he left his overcoat behind.”

“Even so, he was more successful than the gentleman in the Bab Ballad,” said Mr. Estes.

“How was that?” asked the President of the Bank.

“I refer you to the Bab Ballad in question,” said Mr. Estes.

“Oh, come!” protested the President of the Bank.

Whereupon the Masfield Professor of Poetry came with: —

“Old Peter vanished like a shot,  
But then — *his suit of clothes did not.*”

And the Corporation Lawyer followed with: —

"So there remained a coat of blue,  
A vest and double eyeglass too,  
His tail, his shoes, his socks as well,  
His pair of — no, I must not tell."

And Miss Carter added : —

"The poor old fellow had no rest ;  
His coat, his stock, his shoes, his vest,  
Were all that now met mortal eye —  
The rest, invisibility !"

And Mr. Estes : —

"But — here 's the worst of the affair —  
Whene'er he came across a pair  
Already placed for him to don,  
He was too stout to put them on !"

At this point the President of the Bank recovered sufficient presence of mind to rap on the table with his gavel, and the duet between the Masefield Professor of Poetry and the eminent Corporation Lawyer discreetly ceased.

"But we don't know," said Dr. Thorpe, blowing his nose and wiping his eyes, "we don't know that it is his overcoat. Miss Patience Farwell can't identify it, as she was in western Massachusetts when he dined with

Miss Patty at their apartment. Officer Murphy asked me if he might bring it here to-night on his way down to the Square, to see if Miss Carter, who was at Miss Patty's dinner, or any one of the rest of us could identify it; and I told him he might. But to continue: The Poet and the Manager of the Bookshop, apparently both impressed by the brilliant suggestion of the President of the College —"

"Must I shoulder the full responsibility?" said the President of the College. "Well, if I must —"

"Have both disappeared," continued Dr. Thorpe.

"Or we think they have," amended the Masefield Professor of Poetry.

"We think they have," accepted Dr. Thorpe. "But whether singly or together, independently or in collusion, we have not yet been able to determine. At ten minutes past ten — I am right, am I not, Miss Armitage? — on Friday evening, Miss Armitage and Miss Carter turned at the College gate and, looking across the turnpike, saw Miss



Farwell standing in the doorway of the old red house, and the Poet leaning on the parapet of the railroad bridge looking toward Boston. This is the last time the Poet was seen by anyone."

"Oh, was it?" said the President of the Woman's Club. "I thought —"

"At twenty minutes past ten," said Dr. Thorpe, "Traffic Officer Murphy saw a man drop off the bridge upon a moving freight train —"

"As I understand it," Miss Carter corrected, "the man was on the stone pier, or whatever they call it, at the end of the bridge by Alcott Street, and as the freight passed, almost on a level with his feet and very close, he jumped across to the top of one of the cars."

"Thank you, Miss Carter," said Dr. Thorpe. "Officer Murphy tried to stop him but could n't, and therefore crossed the bridge to the turnpike on his way to the Square. And as he passed the Bookshop he saw the Manager, through a lighted window, petting the cat. That would have been about ten-twenty-five."

"By the way," said the President of the Bank, "can anybody tell me the name of the cat?"

"Bibelot," said the President of the College and the Masfield Professor of Poetry, speaking together.

"Bib —?" said the President of the Bank.

"— elot," said the President of the College.

"B-i-b-e-l-o-t," spelled the Masfield Professor of Poetry.

"Oh," said the President of the Bank vaguely.

"A small object of art, a little edition de luxe," said the Masfield Professor of Poetry.

"Of course," the President of the Bank assented. Then he laughed and slapped his knee. "Nothing; nothing. No consequence. Go on, Doctor."

"At twenty minutes of eleven," said Dr. Thorpe, "Officer Hickory, the campus policeman, came to the College gate on his beat and saw the lights go out in the Bookshop and the Manager come out on the porch. She called across, 'Good night, Mr. Hickory,' and locked the door. As she started across the bridge

toward Alcott Street, a man with a heavy suitcase came toward her on the bridge. Then the trolley came up from the Square and slowed down at the corner, hiding the two people on the bridge. When it had passed, Miss Farwell and the man with the suitcase had disappeared. This is the last time Miss Farwell was seen."

"Are we sure?" said the Principal of the Preparatory School. "Think of the girl in the leopard-skin jacket."

"Thank you, Miss Chesterfield, I'm just coming to that," said Dr. Thorpe. The look of cheerful geniality so usual to his countenance had faded. All the faces around the table were a little troubled and perplexed. "According to Miss Patience Farwell's account," Dr. Thorpe resumed, "her niece, on Friday evening last, was wearing a dull blue crêpe de Chine dress, a new leopard-skin jacket with a beaver collar, and a fawn-colored velours hat."

"Brown suède pumps," prompted Miss Armitage.

"And brown suède pumps," said Dr.

Thorpe. "Thank you, Miss Armitage. And sometime between eleven and half past, on Friday evening, Officer Murphy, on traffic duty in the Square, saw a woman wearing a leopard-skin coat with a beaver collar and a fawn-colored velours hat go by in a Pierce-Arrow car toward Boston. He could n't see the woman's face because her head was loosely bound up with a handkerchief or cloth, with the hat tilted on top, and she was supported in the arms of an old lady. The car was driven by a bearded old gentleman, and there was a camping outfit strapped to the running board, and a dent in the radiator. The fender was badly bent. It never occurred to Murphy to connect the coat with Miss Patty. He had n't seen her new coat."

"It seems so — so irrelevant," said Miss Chesterfield.

"Clues often seem irrelevant," said the eminent Corporation Lawyer. He was frowning intently.

"On Saturday morning," said Dr. Thorpe, "the Bookshop was not open at nine o'clock, and Miss Dorothy Fentress, Mr. Winterbury,

and I, who had met at the door, were wondering what we ought to do about it, when Officer Murphy came over the bridge from Alcott Street with a brown suède slipper in his pocket and a broken whiskey bottle in his hand. Following his suggestion, and because we were going in that direction anyway, as Mr. Winterbury wanted to deliver to Miss Patty some roses the Poet had ordered for her and Miss Fentress and I both wanted to get into the shop, we all three went over the bridge, and discovered the wrecked Ford car at the corner of Alcott Street and Emerson Road, the thirty-six whiskey bottles, — no, thirty-five, Murphy had one, — in the field, and the puddle — or damp spot — in the road. Not then connecting this catastrophe with the disappearance of Miss Patty, for we had not yet identified the slipper as hers, we lingered for a while, out of curiosity, and then went on to the Penfield apartments, where we learned that Miss Patty and her aunt were both, apparently, away. On Tuesday, Miss Patience Farwell returned and identified the slipper and gave us the disconcerting infor-

mation about the leopard-skin jacket. On Wednesday, — it was Wednesday, Miss Carter? — you heard from Orange that the Poet had not met his engagement to lecture there. On Thanksgiving Day, Willie Penfield and his father discovered the twelve bottles of hooch in the Bookshop cellar.”

“It is perfectly absurd to think that Patty Farwell could have had anything to do with those bootleggers,” said the President of the Woman’s Club.

“My dear Mrs. Matthews,” said Dr. Thorpe, “no one thing in this fantastic concatenation of circumstances is more absurd than anything else.”

“Someone is knocking at the outer door,” said Miss Armitage.

The Master of the Boy Scouts hurriedly answered the knock, and returned with Officer Murphy, who carried a very good-looking overcoat on his arm.

“Did any of you ladies and gentlemen ever see this coat before?” asked Officer Murphy. And the overcoat went from hand to hand round the table. There were stains down the

front. "Pigs," said Officer Murphy, in response to an inquiring glance from Miss Carter.

"London make," said Mr. Estes.

"Just about my size," said the Chairman.

"Pity about those stains, but they'll come —"

"Try it on, Whittemore," said Mr. Estes.

So the Chairman tried it on, and the other men stood round him, coveting it.

"Do poets wear as — as expensive coats as this?" asked Dr. Thorpe.

"It would n't be so expensive, you know, in England," said the Corporation Lawyer.

"The Poet was in London last summer," said Miss Carter.

"So was I," said Mr. Estes.

"So was I," said Mr. Whittemore. "You can't have this coat, Estes." He put his hand in one of the pockets and drew out a cake of Peter's milk chocolate.

"Now, I know it's mine," said the Master of the Boy Scouts. "Peter's chocolate is always part of my equipment."

"Miss Carter, don't you recognize this



overcoat?" said Officer Murphy, ignoring the levity of the gentlemen.

But Miss Carter could identify neither the coat nor the chocolate.

"Speaking of coats, Mr. Murphy," said Miss Chesterfield, "what has been done about the leopard-skin jacket?"

"Well, you would n't hardly believe it, Miss Chesterfield," Officer Murphy replied, "but no less than sixteen leopard-skin coats have been reported as seen in passing, by traffic police between here and Boston, and here and New York, and here and Chicago, since last Friday night; and three of them were in Pierce-Arrow cars. But none of the Pierce-Arrows were damaged."

"How about the camping outfit?" asked the Scout Master.

"Two of the Pierce-Arrows had outfits. But you could n't expect the police to say how many other cars passed with camping outfits, Mr. Valentine. They're going by in battalions this time of year, south and west; especially south."

"And if the girl in the leopard-skin coat had

a broken head," said Mr. Estes, "she may be in a Boston — or other — hospital, even now, with her leopard-skin coat hanging up behind the door."

"Well, she 's not, Mr. Estes," said Officer Murphy. "We 've been the rounds, and checked up all the women with broken heads in hospitals in Boston or the suburbs. They 're all accounted for."

"Good work!" said the Corporation Lawyer.

"She may be sick abed in a private house or a flat. She 's not in a hotel. It 's this hitch about the time that makes this case so difficult for the police, Mr. Estes. In the first place, we lost from Friday till Tuesday, thinking Miss Patience Farwell would know something. And then there 's no knowing whether the folks in that Pierce-Arrow started off next morning, or in two days, or three. Or whether, when they did start, they did n't turn round and go back to Maine, where we think they came from."

"They may have traded off the Pierce-Arrow, disabled, for another car," suggested the President of the Bank.

"We thought of that, Mr. Whittemore. Word came through from Guilford, Connecticut, just before I came up here to-night, that a girl with her head bound up passed through there yesterday; but she was n't in a Pierce-Arrow and she did n't have on the coat. We're going to canvass the repair shops and motor exchanges, to see if there's been a trade of a Pierce-Arrow for some other car."

"Why could n't my Scouts help, there?" asked Mr. Valentine.

"They might," assented Officer Murphy. "I'm sure Cap'n Torrey 'd be willing. He's got his hands full."

"Well, Murphy," said the President of the Bank, "we may be small-town folks, here in Hawthorne, but there's nothing the matter with our police force."

A gratified smile illumined the countenance of Officer Murphy. "Thank you, Mr. Whittemore, I'll tell the Captain," he said, moving toward the door.

"Oh, Murphy," called Dr. Thorpe, "why don't you take that coat over to Winterbury's? He may recognize it. Mr. Slocumbe went

to the greenhouse to order flowers for Miss Patty Farwell, Friday afternoon."

"Thank you, Doctor, I'll stop there tomorrow morning. There's not much escapes Winterbury. Did you put the cake of chocolate back in the pocket, Mr. Valentine? No—it won't drop out, carrying it the way I do. I'm sorry to have taken your time. Good night." He put his head in at the door to add, "If this is a joke the Poet and Miss Patty are putting over on us, God help them when Cap'n Torrey gets a-hold of them!"

## CHAPTER IX

"It is moved and seconded that disappearances into the Fourth Dimension be taken seriously. All those in favor will please say 'Aye.' Opposed, 'No.' It is a vote."

Mr. Whittemore laid his gavel on the table and settled back in his chair. "Very well, then; the first serious question to come before us is: What are we to do about Miss Patty? The second is: What are we to do about the Bookshop? These are really very serious questions indeed."

"You mean, are we to offer a reward for Miss Patty?"

"Well, are we?" countered the Chairman.

"If the Board is agreeable, I'm perfectly ready to offer a reward of a thousand dollars for the discovery of Miss Patty, or information as to her whereabouts," said Mr. Estes.

"I'll add a thousand," said Miss Chesterfield.

"I can give a thousand," said Mr. Whittemore.

"I'll see if the Woman's Club can raise five hundred," said Mrs. Matthews.

"The students and faculty will want to help, I'm sure," said Miss Armitage. "Do you think we might suggest to them another thousand, Miss Carter?"

"I do, certainly," said Miss Carter.

"Shall we see what the Church and the Scouts can do, Valentine?" said Dr. Thorpe. "This is a Community Bookshop."

"I'm with you, Doctor," said Mr. Valentine. "The Scouts will do the canvassing, anyway."

"Four thousand five hundred, plus Church and Scouts," said Mr. Estes.

"I'll make up whatever we lack of five thousand," said Miss Chesterfield. "And the school will want to do something."

"Five thousand — that's a good, dignified sum," said Mr. Whittemore. "How about it, Estes? I'm not used to offering rewards for missing ladies."

"I should say a perfectly suitable sum,

Mr. Chairman," said Mr. Estes. "But — we shall look a precious set of fools if —" he paused.

"It was voted that we take disappearances into the Fourth Dimension seriously," said the Chairman.

"True," said Mr. Estes, and lapsed into thought.

"She has been gone a week, now — more than a week," said the President of the College, "and her great-aunt has heard nothing from her."

"You're sure the old lady knows nothing, has heard nothing?" queried the President of the Woman's Club.

"Absolutely," said Dr. Thorpe with emphasis.

"Instead of offering a public reward, at least for the present," said Mr. Estes, "we might tell the police what we can offer, and have them pass the word along through the proper channels."

"You don't advocate employing a private detective?" suggested Miss Chesterfield.

"I should say that would be for Miss



Patience Farwell to do; hardly for us," Mr. Estes replied.

"The faith of that dear old lady is an example to us all," said Dr. Thorpe.

"But suppose her great-niece never does come home?" said the Masfield Professor of Poetry.

The members of the Board, with eyes cast down, meditated. A long pause was broken by the President of the College, who said with her most matter-of-fact decisiveness: "Until we can be quite sure that Miss Patty is not coming back to the Bookshop, I think we should all emulate the tranquillity of her great-aunt. I am particularly anxious that the students should approach the situation with sanity. The worst thing possible for the College and the town would be a wave of hysteria. I'm sure you agree with me, Miss Chesterfield."

"Entirely, Miss Armitage," said the Principal of the Girls' Preparatory School.

"And I've always observed that the best way to keep people sane," continued the President of the College, "is to give them

something to do: to make them a part of the situation." Nods of agreement from the Board. "I suggest therefore that we turn now to the Chairman's second question, 'What are we to do about the Bookshop,' and lay our plans."

"An excellent idea," said the Chairman. "But first we should have a motion from Mr. Estes about the rewards. Should n't we?"

"I move," said Mr. Estes, "that the Chairman request our police department to inform the police of this community or other communities who may be engaged in the search for Miss Patty Farwell, the Manager of our Bookshop, that the Directors of the Community Bookshop of Hawthorne hereby offer a reward of five thousand dollars for the discovery of the person of the aforesaid Miss Farwell; but that notices of this reward are not to be posted in public places or advertised in the public press until such time as the Directors shall consent to such posting or such publication."

"I second the motion," said Miss Chesterfield.

As there were no further remarks, the motion was voted upon and carried.

"Now is the opportunity for our village Sherlock Holmeses, our mute, inglorious Secret-Service Smiths, our Monsieur Le Cocqs to fortune and to fame unknown," murmured the Masfield Professor of Poetry. "May I suggest to Miss Armitage that one practical way to make the students a part of this situation is to turn the College into a detective bureau."

"May I inform Miss Carter that this has already been done," said the President of the College blandly. "But a surplus of intellectual, physical, and nervous energy still remains to the student body, sufficient, I think, to run the Bookshop until the Christmas vacation and incidentally to meet the requirements of the classroom — though of this last I am not wholly convinced. The Head of Student Government assures me, however, that the 'academic' shall not suffer."

"Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,'" murmured the Masfield Professor

of Poetry, still wandering aptly through Gray's Elegy.

"You flatter me," said the President of the College with dry irony.

"I was referring to the Head of Student Government," said the Masefield Professor of Poetry, and chuckled.

"I'm sure the Woman's Club will be only too glad to help with the Bookshop," said Mrs. Matthews. "We'll appoint a committee."

"I'll see if one of the Bank accountants can spare time evenings to keep tab on the finances," said Mr. Whittemore. "The cash register will do the rest."

And it was presently arranged that for the three weeks preceding the Christmas vacation the college students should take charge, and that during the vacation the Woman's Club should be responsible. Miss Chesterfield would lend her private secretary two afternoons a week for correspondence.

"It strikes me we're planning a rather long campaign," said Mr. Valentine. "Just what do we think about these disappearances, anyhow?"

No one seemed to be in a hurry to reply, but Dr. Thorpe at last reluctantly came out of reverie.

"If it is not a joke," he said, weighing his words, "it must be somehow connected with the bootlegging incident. Either Miss Patty surprised the bootleggers here in the Bookshop and they have concealed her somewhere until they can escape and cover their tracks—"

"But she was seen to leave the Bookshop," said Mrs. Matthews.

"She may have forgotten something and come back for it, and found the man with the suitcase," said Dr. Thorpe.

"She may have come back to shake the furnace," said Mr. Valentine.

"Or," continued Dr. Thorpe, "she encountered them in the road, and when she discovered what they were doing with the Ford she accused them; Miss Patty was—is a very courageous young woman. And they, while endeavoring to abduct her, may have been run into by the middle-aged lady and gentleman. The slipper seems to indicate

that there was a struggle. I see the bootleggers making off under cover of the darkness, and the middle-aged lady and gentleman left with the unconscious Miss Patty." Dr. Thorpe paused to consider.

"Then the middle-aged lady and gentleman kidnapped her. But why?" said Mr. Estes.

"It seems to me much more probable that she is being held somewhere by the bootleggers," said Mrs. Matthews.

"Oh, no! Oh, no! That would be too dreadful!" cried Miss Chesterfield.

Just then a grinding rattle shook the house, and the Board of Directors leaped to its feet.

"It's that boy of Penfield's, shaking the furnace," said Mr. Whittemore; but he went to the cellar stairs and called down, "That you, Willie?"

"Yes, sir," said Willie. "Will you please, sir, send the cat down?"

Bibelot, who had been asleep in Miss Carter's lap, was carried to the head of the cellar stairs by Mr. Valentine and gently assisted downward.

"Is n't this rather late for you, Willie?" called Mr. Valentine.

"Well, yes, sir; but I knew you was all here. Ma told me."

"Willie," called Mr. Estes, also leaning over the cellar stairs, "does anyone have a key to the cellar bulkhead but you? Does anyone but you and your father and mother ever go into the cellar?"

"No, sir. Except I used to leave the key of the bulkhead inside the old garbage tin behind the house for Jimmie Colby to put the milk in the cellar in the mornings for Bibi, because twice it was stole from the front porch. But I have n't since, since — Ma thought better not."

"Give your mother my compliments, Willie," said Mr. Estes.

"Yes, sir. She said we'd lock the stable door now the mare was stole. Good night, sir. Good night, Mr. Valentine. Good night, everybody," called Willie.

"But we have n't explained the Poet," said Miss Carter, when the Board had returned to the discussion of the disappearances.



"Don't expect me to explain these modern poets," said Dr. Thorpe. "My exegesis ends with Browning."

"I do think, however," said Miss Carter, "that each one of us should do what he or she can."

"If the Poet was with the pigs —" began Mrs. Matthews, and paused.

"It sounds like a new version of the Prodigal Son," said Mr. Estes.

"If the Poet was with the pigs," repeated Mrs. Matthews thoughtfully, "he probably ended in Chicago."

"Sausage," mused the President of the Bank; and finding that he had inadvertently thought aloud, he added, "I beg your pardon."

"But I was under the impression that we supposed that the Poet eloped with Miss Patty," said the Master of the Boy Scouts.

"Perhaps the old gentleman with a beard, driving the Pierce-Arrow, was the Poet in disguise," suggested Dr. Thorpe.

"Then how did his overcoat come to be in a freight car in Albany?" asked Miss Chesterfield.

"We're not yet sure that it is his overcoat," Mr. Estes reminded her.

"I think the Poet and Miss Patty attacked the bootleggers at the crossroads and were rescued by the old lady and gentleman in the Pierce-Arrow," said the President of the Bank.

"But then the middle-aged gentleman could n't have been the Poet in disguise," Dr. Thorpe objected. "Where was the Poet?"

"He was lying concealed and unconscious in the bottom of the car," said the President of the Bank, triumphantly.

"That's as safe a bet as any," agreed Mr. Estes.

"I think," said Miss Armitage, "that we must never lose sight of the fact that we are dealing here with the Fourth Dimension. We must not look for a relevant solution to this mystery."

"You would proceed by the *non sequitur*?" questioned Mr. Estes.

"I'm afraid so."

"Would you give your suggestion in the form of a motion?" said Mr. Whittemore.

"Yes; I move that we adjourn," said Miss Armitage.

"Second the motion," chuckled Miss Carter.

The gentlemen walked together as far as the Square, and Mr. Whittemore entertained them with the story of Bibi the Bibbler. The turnpike echoed with their laughter. At the Square they found Officer Murphy on duty, not wigwagging in his pulpit, but casually genial on a street corner.

"Did you know, Murphy," said Mr. Estes, "that Jimmie Colby had access to the Bookshop cellar? He used to leave Bibelot's milk inside."

## CHAPTER X

IN the middle of the next morning, Traffic Officer Murphy strolled into Mr. Winterbury's greenhouse with the overcoat on his arm. Mr. Winterbury was giving one of his men directions about potting begonias.

"Did you ever see this coat, Winterbury?" asked Officer Murphy.

"Sure!" said Mr. Winterbury.

"Where?"

"It's that Poet's overcoat. He had it on the afternoon he came in to order Miss Patty's roses. I remember those sleeves running up over the shoulder into the collar that way. Is there a cake of chocolate in the pocket?"

"There is. Did he offer you a bite?"

"No. But he took the coat off in the rose house, and the cake of chocolate fell out."

"Well, that's that!" said Officer Murphy. "It was found rolled up in a corner of an empty freight, in the yards at Albany. The way I dope it out, he went along the top of the

train till he got clear of the pigs, and when the train slowed up he got into an empty and used his coat for a pillow. Then in the morning, when it was light, something scared him and he jumped off and forgot his coat."

"How 're you tracing him now?"

"I 'm not tracing him. What would I trace him for? If a fool poet chooses to steal a ride on a freight and drop off in the Berkshires, what 's that to me?"

"But he 's disappeared."

"Has he? Not officially. We have n't been notified. There has n't anybody been clamoring for him so far as I know, except the ladies of Orange, New Jersey; and they would n't have him now as a gift."

"All the same, Murphy, he has disappeared."

"I disappear a hundred times a day, Winterbury, every time I walk out of sight. So do you. The police can't waste their time on that sort of thing. Now Miss Patty's disappeared: that 's different. Her aunt has notified us that she wants her found. We 're tracing her."

"But I understand they 've eloped."

"Well, if they have, we may find them both together. Unless they get a divorce first. Things move swift in these days. Mind you, I 'm not saying we have n't given a description of him to the police. But it 's her we 're tracing."

"Suppose the police, that ain't looking for him," said Mr. Winterbury, sarcastically, "should bump into him without meaning to?"

"Well, of course, I don't for a minute think he *has* murdered her," said Officer Murphy, "but it 's possible we might have to hold him on suspicion."

"Say, that gives me the willies," said Mr. Winterbury, following Officer Murphy out of the greenhouse into the florist shop. "I 'd rather raise flowers for a living than have your job, even if mine is a luxury trade."

"Luxury trade?" echoed Officer Murphy.

"That 's what they call it at the College, in the Economics Department, I understand."

"Then you and the Poet must be in the same class," jeered the Traffic Officer. "If

there's anything that's a luxury, I should say it was poets."

"Seems to me, Murphy, you're kind of bitter about that young man."

"Well, if you were following up an elopement, and one of the parties went to Albany and the other went to Baltimore, you might be bitter yourself."

"To Baltimore?"

"And then some."

"You've got a clue, then?"

"Clue! Every day we add another leopard-skin jacket to the list, and as for Pierce-Arrows —"

"If I was you, I'd hunt the slipper. The other slipper, I mean."

"Nobody's preventing you."

"Except my luxury trade; and I'm breaking in a new man."

"That fellow in the greenhouse? I noticed him. He's not a Hawthorne man. What's become of young Peterson?"

"Appendicitis. He won't be able to stoop and lift for six months. Taken sudden, a week ago, and this one just happened in on



Monday. He's looking for a job driving a truck or a delivery car, but he was willing to try this; he's been on a farm. I'm looking for a secondhand car to fetch and carry with, the delivery car's kept so busy; and if I find one, this man can haul for me when he's not in the greenhouse. I suppose you don't want to sell me that bootlegger's Ford you've got at the station house?" Mr. Winterbury laughed as he made this suggestion.

Officer Murphy had turned his back for the moment, to look through the glass door of the office into the greenhouse at the new man. For a perceptible fragment of time he remained with his back turned, silent; then he wheeled slowly. "It would n't be exactly regular," he said. "Of course, we're supposed to be holding that car till the owner claims it. But I'll see what Cap'n Torrey thinks."

Mr. Winterbury gaped in amazement: "Why, I was joking," he said.

"I know you was," said Officer Murphy, "but there's that car laying idle." He turned again and looked through the glass door.

"Throw in the overcoat, and we'll call it a trade," said Mr. Winterbury jocosely.

"How about his pyjamas and his Gillette safety razor? We've got them, too, at the station house."

"You might hold a rummage sale," suggested the florist.

"Say, you've given me a lot of new ideas this morning, Winterbury. I'd better be getting down to headquarters to report them before they slip my mind." And adjusting the Poet's overcoat carefully on his arm, Officer Murphy departed.

That afternoon Officer Hickory dropped into the greenhouse. He was looking for a little pot of something for his wife's birthday, he said. She was a great one for flowers. Mr. Winterbury took him to the shed where the begonias were being potted, and chose a fluffy pink one for him. The new man was washing his hands under a faucet. It was almost five o'clock.

"Peterson has appendicitis, I understand," said Officer Hickory.

"Yes," said Mr. Winterbury. "This is

my new greenhouse man, Jerry Pike. Meet Officer Hickory, Jerry ; you want to keep on the good side of the police in our town if you 're going to settle here."

Jerry Pike, awkward and shy, looked up at Officer Hickory sideways, and grinned nervously.

"You a regular nurseryman?" asked Officer Hickory, kindly.

"I been on a farm," said Jerry Pike, struggling into his coat.

"He 's doing fine," said Mr. Winterbury. "This is the one you want, is it, Hickory? Let me send it up to your wife from me?"

"Not on your life," laughed Hickory, "they 'd be callin' it graft. I 'm givin' her this plant. Thank you just the same." And to Jerry Pike he said, with a friendly, enveloping glance, "If Mr. Winterbury treats you rough, just let us know."

When Officer Hickory had gone, the florist called his new man into the office to pay him his week's wages and Jerry Pike remarked casually : —

"You seem to be great pals with the police,

Mr. Winterbury. This is the second one here to-day."

"Well, you see," said his employer, "I've been helping them out with a clue to a disappearance case that they're working on."

"Disappearance?" queried Jerry Pike.

"Yes; the young lady that keeps the Bookshop, and a Poet. Some thinks together. Some thinks separately. They found her slipper in the road by a broken-down Ford car. Were you going to say something?"

"No," said Jerry Pike. He drew a worn bill-fold from his breast pocket and thoughtfully stowed away his week's wages. "My fingers is all thumbs, after working with them flowerpots all day," he said. And it was true; his hands were very unsteady. "What was the clue?" he asked, and Mr. Winterbury gave him the story of the Poet's overcoat in all its details, including the cake of chocolate.

During the evening, when the florist was checking up the November charge accounts, Captain Torrey at the police station called him on the telephone.

"That you, Winterbury?"

"Yes."

"Anybody there with you?"

"No."

"Well, see here, Winterbury. I understand from Murphy that you are looking for a secondhand car and have your eye on that bootlegger Ford —"

"Yes — but — I never thought —" stammered the florist.

"Well, now, it's like this: We could n't sell the car — at least not yet awhile until this affair's cleared up. Technically it don't belong to us, of course. But it's just laying here idle, and if you choose to have it put in order, the wheel put on and a new brake, and one or two other little things, you can have it for the price of the repairs till we nab the bootlegger; and then maybe he'll rent it to you while he's serving his term." Captain Torrey's pleasant laugh hummed on the wire. "Only," the voice sobered abruptly, "it's understood that you don't give it away to anybody that we're doing you this little favor. Between ourselves, Winterbury. Absolutely."

"I understand, Cap'n. I 'll take you."

To himself, as he hung up the receiver, Mr. Winterbury said: "Graft? — But am I graftin' him or is he graftin' me?"

## CHAPTER XI

THE six weeks between the close of the Thanksgiving recess and the end of the Christmas holidays went down in Hawthorne annals as the Bookshop Boom.

During the first three weeks the students set the pace. And no one knew who started the idea, but it came to be understood that in buying a book you showed your confidence in Patty Farwell: you ranged yourself on her side. Somehow, buying a book took on the mysterious quality of an act of faith, an offering to the goddess. To be an initiate of the cult you bought a book. If you bought five books, you acquired merit as a devotee. If your charge account exceeded twenty dollars, you were one of the elect. "For Patty's sake!" became the slogan; and the antiphon of the priestesses in the temple was, "How many books do you suppose we can sell before she comes back?" The skeptic was frowned upon. No one ever said, "Suppose she



does n't come back." It was not good form. It was not sane.

"Now, girls," said the Head of Student Government, when she outlined the Bookshop plan at a mass meeting of the students, "we're going to be sane. That's the important thing. Sanity. We're going to buy books, and sell books, and make change, and order more books from the publishers. And we're going to do it systematically and accurately. We have an unparalleled opportunity here to bring our college training to bear on business methods. We must n't fall down on it. Keep your minds on your job and don't waste time mooning over things you can't explain. Some of us think Miss Patty and the Poet are playing a joke on this community. Well, if they are, we must make that joke our opportunity and show them how we can rise to it. And the way to rise to it is to buy books. Some of us think Miss Patty and maybe the Poet are kidnapped by bootleggers. Well, if they are, the police have got the matter in hand and we must just show them that we can trust them to know their business.

And the way to show them is to be sane, and keep the Bookshop running for Miss Patty's sake till she comes back. President Armitage is particularly anxious that Dickinson College should be a good example to Hawthorne under these trying circumstances. If a wave of hysteria were to start, there's no knowing where or when it would stop. I've given my word to the President for all of us that we will be sane. I depend on you. She depends on you. And, girls, of course I don't need to say it, but we won't any of us forget the 'academic,' will we?"

The plan provided that the three weeks preceding the Christmas holidays should be in charge of the junior, sophomore, and freshman classes, successively, from eight-thirty A.M. until five-thirty P.M., and that the senior class should take charge of every evening during the three weeks, from seven to nine-thirty. The sale of Christmas cards and etchings was given in charge to Miss Chesterfield's school. The graduate students were responsible for the ordering of new books and other supplies.

There was fierce emulation in buying between the classes, and in the end the freshman class came out ahead, by sheer force of numbers. The Town was under vows to buy only books and Bookshop material — such as cards, prints, etchings, maps ancient and modern, brasses, foreign pottery and leather work — for Christmas presents. Miss Chesterfield's pupils collected editions de luxe.

With the beginning of the Christmas holidays, the Woman's Club, under the able leadership of Mrs. Matthews, took charge. Not to be outdone by the College, the Town now gave itself safely and sanely to the cult of the Bookshop. The Committee on Social Service and the Committee on Art combined in an advertising campaign throughout the neighboring towns and suburbs. It was an open winter, and during the week before Christmas a special policeman had to be detailed for the corner of Emerson Road and the turnpike to see that the motor cars parked around the Bookshop obeyed the parking laws. Between Christmas and New Year's there was a special sale of calendars, birthday

books, *Daily Strength for Daily Needs*, year books. The Lending Library waxed, until five librarians were kept busy till nine-thirty every evening. The House and Garden Committee of the Woman's Club started a sale of nature books, garden books, books on architecture and foreign travel. The Music Committee created a demand for French folk songs with illustrations by Boutet de Monvel; for lives of Wagner and Beethoven and Debussy. There was a revival of interest in *Jean Christophe*.

The best sellers throughout the six weeks were, naturally enough, poetry and detective stories. But Einstein, Keyserling, Spengler, and von Hügel also sold in modest numbers. Book catalogues were studied by would-be buyers, and many suburban private libraries got their first impetus in the days of the Boom. The countryside never afterwards really lost the habit of buying books. When the excitement was all over, people still came to the Bookshop once a week at least, to consider the purchase of a new book. The movie theatres were quite disgruntled over it.

"And you know," said the President of the Bank to Mr. Estes, in the middle of the Boom, "they're so delightfully innocent about it. 'For Patty's sake!' But this is a coöperative enterprise. The more books sold, the bigger dividends to the community."

"Yes," said Mr. Estes, "that aspect did not escape me, even when I was buying the twenty-five dollar *Saint François d'Assise*, by Subercaseaux Errazuiriz, for my wife's Christmas."

Dr. Thorpe blessed the Boom for other reasons. As he remarked on one of his frequent pastoral visits to Miss Farwell: "Whatever happens, dear Miss Patience, you must always take comfort in the thought that your niece's disappearance has done more for Christian unity in this town than all the combined efforts of the Protestant and Catholic clergy for ten years past. We're working together as one big family, not competitively, but with childlike Early Christian emulation. We've found each other out, town and gown, rich and poor, and we like each other lots. Joe Penfield got the idea first, when he mended

the frozen water-pipes for nothing — the Community idea. And now everybody's waked up to it. We owe a great deal to your niece."

"It's sweet to hear it, Doctor," said Miss Patience. "I only wish my Patty was n't missing all the fun."

The Pastor searched his heart for a comforting word and found one. "Perhaps she is n't, dear Miss Patience," he said. "Perhaps she's laughing at her joke all the while."

"Well, if we can trust the Lost and Found column," agreed Miss Farwell, "she may be."

This was cryptic to Dr. Thorpe. He had n't read the Lost and Found column lately.

## CHAPTER XII

THE notices began to appear in the Lost and Found columns of the *Boston Transcript*, the *Springfield Republican*, and the *New York Times* simultaneously during the second week of December. Miss Winthrop, the Professor of Comparative Religion, called the first one to Miss Carter's attention. "What do you make of this?" she asked.

The Masefield Professor of Poetry read it to herself thoughtfully, and then read it aloud:—

"To whom it may concern. We gave each other rendezvous in the Fourth Dimension. Have you forgotten?"

After a pause she said: "One would infer that they are not together. Which do you think it is—Poet, or Patty?"

Miss Winthrop pondered. "He or she reads the papers. Our foolish little notice, that we made up at the President's dinner-table, has n't fallen quite flat if it suggested



to him or her a way to communicate with her or him."

"He or she reads more than one newspaper," mused Miss Carter.

When they showed it to the President of the College, she said, "Who do you think it is?"

"Who do you think?" said Miss Carter.

"I think it's the Poet," said the President.

Miss Patience Farwell thought it was the Poet, too. She said Patty would have too much pride and too much modesty to ask a young man if he had forgotten his appointment with her.

Two days later there was a second notice in the three papers. Miss Farwell and the President were justified. It read:—

Sorry. When I pranced through, I lost my slipper. It hampers me.

The third communication appeared in the *Transcript* only. Now that the Poet had got Patty's attention, he evidently bethought him that three papers were unnecessary, and saved his pennies. The message was also frugal. It said:—

Guide me!

The fourth appeared only in the *Springfield Republican*: —

I'm awfully afraid you'll have to raise  
your voice.

The fifth came out in the *New York Times*: —

Sorry. It's raised to the nth now, but  
vibrations curve more here.

"Rescue me thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor motions to depart!"

The sixth communication returned to the  
*Transcript*, and merely said: —

That was Browning's voice, not yours.

It was wonderful how reassuring the community found these messages. But some people grumbled at never knowing in which paper to look for them, so the Bookshop obligingly posted them on a little bulletin board on the piazza at the right of the front door. And pressure was so great that two planks in the piazza floor gave way; but fortunately no one was hurt. The village weekly, *Town and Gown*, collated the messages for the Saturday issue, always giving the whole series from the beginning up to date.

The newspaper offices of the *Transcript*,

the *Republican*, and the *Times* were of course visited by the detective who had the case in hand ; but the messages always came to the newspapers through the mail, through letter-box collections, and never from the same town or city. The postmark of the first was Worcester, Mass.; of the second, Newton Centre, Mass.; of the third, New Haven, Conn.; of the fourth, Revere, Mass.; of the fifth, Brooklyn, N. Y.; of the sixth, Pawtucket, R. I. The stationery was of the most casual — half sheets of white, characterless scribble-pads; one half sheet had the letter-head of the Bookshop on it. "Guide me," was on a postcard. The Poet's communications were printed awkwardly in pencil. Patty's were typewritten, sometimes on a Remington, sometimes on a Hammond, sometimes on a Corona. The Poet enclosed a five-dollar bill with his first message to each newspaper, and more later. Patty paid for her messages with postage stamps. In order to assist the police, the newspapers printed the communications, although no addresses and no signatures accompanied them.

The seventh communication was not the voice of Browning.

A Poet whose name I won't mention,  
Respectfully calls your attention  
To the uncharted mazes,  
The fogs and the hazes,  
That obtain in this durned Fourth Dimension.

O Patience, O sweet Condescension,  
Delay not your dear intervention!  
Unravel the clue  
To the lost Rendezvous,  
In this blankety-blank Fourth Dimension.

The postmark was Palmer, Mass., and the verses appeared first in the *New York Times*, but were copied by the leading dailies all over the country, even as far west as Los Angeles, where it was no longer safe to ride in a Pierce-Arrow car and the police had detained on suspicion three young women wearing leopard-skin coats. In Colorado Springs, the home of the Poet's sister, all the newspapers featured the verses, with snapshots of the Poet taken on his last visit. And his sister said, in an interview, that she would have known the verses anywhere: the Poet's authentic note sang in them unmistakably, although the rhymes were in his earlier manner.

The eighth message — Patty's fourth — printed after the Christmas holidays had begun, gave specific directions at some length : —

When the day comes, and the hour, but not yet. Follow any two curving parallel lines to their point of intersection in time, preferably going South. If you have n't your Einstein with you, try a railway guide. Remember! Time is a mode of Space, and there is no time like the present; but to waste time by being ahead of time is to offend the Time Spirit.

The postmark was Baltimore, Md. The paper was the *Springfield Republican*.

The ninth, postmarked Bath, Me., and appearing in the *Transcript*, said : —

So glad it 's South. I forgot to bring my overcoat.

An interval of some days elapsed between the ninth communication and the tenth.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE holidays began, the students and faculty scattered, the Woman's Club took over the management of the Bookshop. By this time publishers in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, Chicago, and San Francisco had waked up to the situation, and most of them had detailed special clerks to fill and expedite the Hawthorne orders. One of the New York publishers is reported to have said that he was sure the book trade would welcome the disappearance of a poet a month, if by that simple method the phenomenal sales could be stabilized.

In Hawthorne Miss Patience Farwell settled down to reading the Lost and Found columns. Dr. Thorpe dropped in to see her every other day, and Traffic Officer Murphy occasionally stopped in on his way home from the Square out of pure kindness of heart, to talk over the latest Lost and Found message and to report a new leopard-skin coat.

"I'm not saying it to anybody else, Miss Farwell, so please don't repeat it," said Officer Murphy, "but I've two weeks' leave coming to me, and I'd thought of going South after Christmas to do a bit of detective work on my own."

"You must let me pay your railway fare and expenses if you do," said the old lady.

And Officer Murphy replied graciously, "Well, I'll tell you, Miss Farwell, I will, and thank you, if the clues in the Lost and Found are put there to lead us off the trail instead of on it. But if I should win that five-thousand-dollar reward, I would n't think of taking anything from you."

Mrs. Penfield also took care that Miss Farwell should not be too much alone. She cleaned for her once a week, and she cooked the old lady's midday meal every day and brought it in from next door on a tray. This was particularly neighborly of Mrs. Penfield, for she had taken Mr. Winterbury's new man to board, and her hands were more than full, not to mention the mess that Joe Penfield



and Willie were making with the new radio they were setting up.

The night the new radio was ready for action, Mrs. Penfield coaxed Miss Farwell in to hear it, and the boarder, Jerry Pike, was there, and a little later Jimmie Colby, who delivered the milk for Hornbeam Farm, came in also. It was after ten o'clock when Mrs. Penfield saw Miss Patience home, and she lingered in the apartment to put the old lady's oatmeal in the fireless cooker for breakfast, and to read over with her the list of Lost and Found notices as they appeared seriatim, up to date, in *Town and Gown*.

"Your boarder and the milk boy seem to have struck up a great friendship," said Miss Patience, making sure that the window looking on the piazza was fastened.

"Have they?" said Mrs. Penfield. "Then it's very sudden, for I don't think they've met before to-night."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Patience, "they have. They sit out there on my piazza steps and talk together. I've seen them there two nights. They're there now."

Mrs. Penfield tiptoed to the window, and moved the shade a crack to one side. The two men were sitting close together on the lowest step, whispering. As she looked, Jimmie Colby jerked away from Jerry Pike, and stood up.

"Nothin' doin', I tell you," said Jimmie in his ordinary tones. "Anything once, but I've had enough."

"You took their pay, you skunk, and you never made even one delivery," said Jerry Pike softly.

"Well, whose fault is it I never made no delivery?" retorted Jimmie. "I earned my money all right takin' the risk of them milk jars."

"You damned quitter," said Jerry Pike, "talkin' to me about risks! I ain't done with you yet."

They stood close together eyeing each other a moment, and then Jerry Pike went around the house to Mrs. Penfield's front door. She heard him shut it. She heard him go upstairs on the other side of the apartment wall. Jimmie Colby stood quite still for a long

time. Then he thrust a hand into a pocket, pulled out what seemed to be bills and change, and shifting his position within range of the dim porch light, counted the money, put it back into his pocket, and suddenly turning, broke into a run down the little flagged path that led from Miss Farwell's porch to Alcott Street.

And that was the last time Mrs. Penfield ever saw Jimmie Colby.

When she went back to her own house, she tried in vain to awaken the interest of her husband and her son in the strange conversation she had heard. They were too absorbed in their new toy to listen to her.

"Grafting the milk, maybe," said Joe Penfield. "Jerry might be trying to get Jimmie to take on a few new customers without letting Hornbeam Farm know; and Jerry and Jimmie would make a clear profit. And Jimmie's got cold feet."

"Come listen in, Ma," pleaded Willie. "We've got Roxy on the air."

But the next day she had her revenge, for the Hornbeam Farm milk was not delivered till noon and then not by Jimmie Colby.

The angry farmer who drove the milk truck was in too much of a hurry to gossip with Mrs. Penfield. "His folks think he's run away to sea," he said over his shoulder as he hastened down the path. "I hope he has. I hope he'll drown."

Jerry Pike came out of the house just then with a suitcase, and Mrs. Penfield said to him: "There's your chance to drive a truck, Jerry. Hornbeam Farm wants a driver."

"I'm suited well enough, now that Mr. Winterbury lets me run his secondhand Ford," said Jerry Pike.

"Jimmie Colby has quit his job," Mrs. Penfield continued.

"Quit his job!" said Jerry.

"Yes; did n't you know?"

"Me?" cried Jerry, "How would I know?"

"You and Jimmy have been mighty thick this last week, I understand."

"Me and Jimmie Colby mighty thick!" he blustered.

"I thought you might be going to join him with that suitcase," added Mrs. Penfield maliciously.

"I'm taking my shirts to the laundry," he shouted at her.

"Well, what's there to get mad about?" she asked cheerily, and then: "Going in the Ford, I suppose?"

"And if I am," he retorted, turning sullen, "it's right on my way to deliver the flowers, is n't it?"

"How do I know?" queried Mrs. Penfield.

"Say, I don't get your joke." Jerry hesitated. "If you think I'm going off without paying my bill, I'll leave the suitcase."

"Oh, go along with you!" said Mrs. Penfield, and went into the house and shut the door.

He set the suitcase on the path and stood uncertainly for a moment, muttering to himself. Mrs. Penfield watched him from behind the muslin curtains that screened the panel of glass in the upper half of the door. Then he took up the suitcase and trudged off with his head down, muttering.

Mrs. Penfield now went to the telephone and called up Captain Torrey at the police station.

"Yes, I know Winterbury's got a new man working for him," said Captain Torrey. "Two new men."

"Two!" said Mrs. Penfield. "Since when?"

"Since he's had a secondhand Ford car to supplement his delivery wagon. Which new man do you mean?"

"I mean the one that boards to my house. The one that took Peterson's place when he went to the hospital. I thought he was the one that was running the Ford car."

"So he is. He runs the car when it's wanted, and between whiles he's in the greenhouse. The other man gives his whole time to the greenhouse, I understand."

"I think he'll bear watching."

"Which?"

"Jerry Pike, my boarder."

"Well, go to it, Mrs. Penfield," said Captain Torrey in the amused, indulgent tone of the expert to the amateur. "I'll have to ring off now. I'm wanted for something important."

"Wait!" shouted Mrs. Penfield. "Jimmie Colby has skipped town; did you know?"

"Skipped town?" Captain Torrey's tone was no longer indulgent or amused. "Suppose you come down here to headquarters and tell me what you know," he said.

He was telephoning when she got there. "Well, make sure that he really is n't coming back this time," he was saying. "Make sure that he's done all his errands and is n't coming home. Let him get to the State line if necessary. Give him all the rope he wants and then bring him in. Yes; they're all notified between here and Boston and here and Albany. We've swept a circle with a long radius. Now, Mrs. Penfield."

"Is it Jimmie Colby you're telephoning about?" she asked, impressed by the rapidity with which he had acted.

"No; it's Jerry Pike," he said curtly. "What about Jimmie?"

When she had finished her story, Captain Torrey looked distinctly irritated. "Of course we've had our eye on Jimmie Colby," he said, "but there was absolutely nothing to go on but the fact that he used to leave the milk for Bibi inside the Bookshop cellar until



you began to lock the cellar door after Miss Patty Farwell disappeared. You can't arrest a milk boy for delivering milk. I'll send a man out to Hornbeam Farm to search his room, and another one to interview his folks here in town. You say his mother thinks he's run away to sea? I'll warn them at the docks — Boston, Fall River, New Bedford, New York; but he has more than twelve hours' start on us. If he had the luck to board a ship sailing this morning, we shan't overhaul him."

Just then the door opened, and Mr. Winterbury strode in. "What's this about Jerry Pike?" he cried. "And who's that other nurseryman I've been teaching how to tie up carnations? I caught him using my office telephone just now, and he flashed a detective badge on me when I called him down. Said you'd explain everything. You've been using me, Cap'n Torrey." Mr. Winterbury's grievance emanated from him like an aura.

"For the good of the community, Winterbury," said Captain Torrey. "There was n't anybody in this village I wanted to take into

my confidence more than you, but if there had been any slip, the community 'd have blamed me for talking. We just had to keep this thing quiet. We just had to have you treating Jerry Pike perfectly natural, the way you 'd treat any nurseryman you 'd hired. And we could n't be sure you could keep it up if you knew we suspected him."

"But the Ford?" faltered Mr. Winterbury.

"Bait."

"I paid for the repairs on that Ford."

"You won't lose anything by it. All you have to do is to send in your bill to the police department when the case is settled."

"How do you know Jerry Pike's not straight? He's driven that Ford round town twice a day since it's been put in order, and he's always come home with it."

"And every time he's taken it out, the plain-clothes man that's been tying up your carnations has notified us here, and we've notified the traffic police in about twenty-five towns. They're all laying for him. Hickory says he's the man that came across Emerson Road bridge at twenty minutes of

eleven the night Miss Patty Farwell disappeared. The man with the suitcase."

"And he had his suitcase with him when he left my house to-day," cried Mrs. Penfield. "He said he was taking his shirts to the laundry, but he hefted that suitcase more like the shirts was made of cast iron."

"I don't see why the suitcase would be heavy now," mused Captain Torrey, "unless he's set up a still in your house, Mrs. Penfield, and is making the stuff in his room."

Mrs. Penfield leaped from her chair. "He could n't have a still in my house and me not know it," she cried.

"I believe you," said Captain Torrey, courteously holding the door open for her.

The headquarters' telephone wire hummed after that. About every half hour some traffic officer called up to say that Jerry Pike in his secondhand Ford had passed that way, with the plain-clothes man and Officer Murphy trailing him in a runabout, a discreet half mile behind. They went through Billerica. They went through Tyngsboro. They crossed the New Hampshire line. The detective tele-

phoned from Nashua at ten minutes before eight that night: —

“He ’s here in a cheap joint, eating supper. He ’s filled up the Ford with gas, ready to go on. Shall we take him now, or trail him to the limit — Canada?”

“Take him now,” said Captain Torrey, “when he ’s eaten his supper and started off again. If we let him get too near the border he may give us the slip, and once he ’s across in Canada, we ’re up against it. Besides, it ’s not likely he came all the way across New Hampshire from Canada to deliver four dozen bottles of hooch. He ’s only a carrier for somebody that does the importing. That ’s why he hung round to swipe the Ford or some other car. He did n’t want to go back empty-handed. Take him now.”

And a very pretty capture it was, as they told about it in police circles in Nashua that night. By preconcerted arrangement, the traffic officer at a crowded street-crossing two blocks beyond the eating-house held up his hand, and Jerry Pike, obedient to the gesture, halted the Ford. On the instant and simul-

taneously, the plain-clothes man climbed in on Jerry's right and clapped the bracelets on Jerry's hands conveniently extended side by side on the steering wheel, and Officer Murphy crowded in on Jerry's left and took the steering wheel into his own hands. At the same time a Nashua policeman attached the runabout to the back of the Ford. The traffic officer waved his hand, and traffic was set in motion once more. Most people who saw the occurrence thought that a runabout had broken down and was being towed home by an obliging man in a Ford.

Jerry Pike, gazing into the eyes of his fellow nurseryman from Winterbury's greenhouse, and then at the handcuffs on his own wrists, said never a word.

"I guess we'll play safe," said his fellow nurseryman, and linked his own wrist to Jerry's.

"Where's the suitcase?" asked Officer Murphy.

"On the back seat," said the nurseryman. "We'll get out when we've cleared Nashua, and have a look."

They did, presently, and found the suitcase empty.

"Took your steel shirts to the laundry, did you, Jerry?" laughed Officer Murphy, and dragging the cushion off the seat of the Ford, flashed his electric torch into the hollow seat. "Milk bottles!" he gasped. "Full of milk! What do you know about that!" And lifted one out.

But it was empty — a white china jar, for all the world like a full milk-bottle. There were twelve in the hollow seat, all empty: all deceptive white china. While the plain-clothes man and Officer Murphy marveled, their captive remained persistently dumb.

When they were again plunging through the night at a pace forbidden by all traffic laws, Officer Murphy said cheerfully: "Wake up, Jerry. What's it all about?"

"Well," countered Jerry Pike, "what *is* it all about? It's up to you to do the explainin', seems to me."

"It's is, is it?" said Officer Murphy. "Then how's this for a lead? Did you ever hear of stealing motor cars? What's this car from

Winterbury's greenhouse doing in Nashua, New Hampshire, headed north?"

"Am I arrested for stealing Winterbury's car?" asked Jerry Pike truculently.

"No — not Winterbury's car," said Officer Murphy. "The car don't belong to Winterbury. Maybe it 's yours?"

Jerry Pike retired into silence.

"Now would n't that be a joke on us if we 'd arrested you for stealing your own car!" said Officer Murphy. He and the plain-clothes man laughed gayly. "But it would be a joke that worked both ways, on you as much as on us, if not more. And if I had my choice I 'd sooner be arrested for stealing a motor car, whether my own or somebody else's, than for peddling hooch."

"You 've nothing to prove I ever peddled hooch," declared Jerry Pike, "nothing."

"We 've got *you*, in the car that was found on the corner of Emerson Road and Alcott Street, deserted, with the hooch in it." Officer Murphy's eyes were always on the road ahead, never on his victim.



"There was n't any hooch in it when —"  
Jerry Pike stopped abruptly.

"That 's right," agreed Officer Murphy.  
"You 're better on the details than I am. The bottles were in the field, empty. Except the ones, the dozen, that was in your suitcase that night when Officer Hickory, standing over by the College gate, saw you coming over the Emerson Road bridge. You did n't see Officer Hickory, did you? And then you went down cellar in the Bookshop and hid those bottles."

"And Officer Hickory saw me?" Jerry's tone was truculent again.

"Officer Hickory 'll tell what he saw, when the case comes up."

"Maybe he 'll tell why he let me get away, instead of taking me then," sneered Jerry.

"He never saw me do none of those things."

"Officer Hickory saw you come over Emerson Road bridge —"

"Well, if he did, how would that prove anything? I suppose he saw the bottles on the inside of the shut-up black oilcloth suitcase? He 'd ought to set up for a medium;

it would pay him better than patrolling Dickinson College."

"And if it was n't bottles in that suitcase, what was it, Jerry? Was it the girl?"

"The girl?"

"That 's disappeared from the Bookshop? Was that before you did her in, or afterwards? Was it in the cellar of the Bookshop, when she went down to fix the furnace, that you did it? Or was it at the corner of Emerson Road and Alcott Street, when she saw you taking the bottles out of the car?"

Jerry's eyes were starting in his head. "Me? That girl?" he screamed.

Officer Murphy kept his eyes always ahead, on the dark road beyond the headlights. He was an excellent chauffeur. "And if I had my choice between being arrested for peddling hooch — and murder —"

"Let up on him, Murphy," said the plain-clothes man. "He 'll have my left hand sawed off at the wrist with these bracelets."

"All he 's got to do is to come across with what he knows," said Officer Murphy. "Now, boy, open up. Hush your crying. If you

did n't kill her, what did you do? You know something. Spit it out."

"I'm no criminal," sobbed Jerry Pike, lifting his manacled hands, and the detective's hand with them, desperately above his head, and dashing them down again, as the Ford hurtled through the night. "I never had these damn things on me before. I tell you, everybody knows me where I come from. I was going to get married. And a party give me a chance to earn twice what I was getting in the mill, making these trips. It was all doped out. The other party had been down lookin' over the country, and he had a talk with that skunk of a milk boy and left him the fake milk-bottles. And he was to drop a hint at houses where he knew it would be safe, — the milk boy, I mean, — houses mostly where there was a chance for him to sneak the fake bottle down cellar when he left the real one at the back door. And all I had to do was to make the trips and leave the stuff in that Bookshop cellar for the milk boy."

"How long you been up to this game?" asked the plain-clothes man.

"That was my first trip," wailed Jerry Pike, "honest to God!"

"Then you never pulled it off at all!" exclaimed Officer Murphy.

"I took a dozen bottles down to the Bookshop cellar that night; the suitcase won't hold more than a dozen. And I was going back to the car to get the second dozen, and there was an old couple in a Pierce-Arrow had run into my car and smashed the wheel. And they had run into the Bookshop lady, and she was layin' there on the road, and the old fellow was fixin' her up. He must have been a doctor all right, the way he went at it. And I hid behind the fence that divides the railroad from Alcott Street. And the old lady, what do you think she done? She took a combination corkscrew-can-opener out of her handbag, and she drew the corks of them thirty-odd remaining bottles, — some was broke, — and she poured that liquor all out in the middle of the road — that liquor that was so expensive it's like drinkin' gold. The real stuff it was, that liquor. And me watchin'. And then they went off with the girl. They was a pair

of 'em, those two. She pourin' out that liquor, and him sayin', 'If you think I'm goin' to report this to the police and be detained here all winter as a witness in a boot-legging incident, you're very much mistaken. The girl'll be all right to-morrow and we'll send her home.' That's what he said."

"Then why did n't they send her home?" pondered Officer Murphy.

"Honest to God, I'm telling you the truth," cried Jerry Pike. "I never laid a finger on that girl. And Colby got his pay with the fake milk-bottles, and never done a lick of work. And I was n't to get mine till the return trip, and here I been since Thanks-giving. And my girl has gone back on me!" He lifted his manacled hands again, and beat them on his knees.

"You sure are a green hand," said the plain-clothes man, sympathetically.

Officer Murphy said nothing. He was meditating on the last message in the Lost and Found column: "Two curving parallel lines, preferably going South."

## CHAPTER XIV

THE clock in the Hawthorne police station struck four — in the morning — as the prisoner signed his name, Jeremiah Pike, to the confession the plain-clothes man had so deftly taken down on the station typewriter. Captain Torrey pressed the blotter upon the signature and sighed. Relief tempered with caution breathed in that gentle exhalation.

To the jailer waiting to take the prisoner to the small, sanitary, often unoccupied jail at the back of the station, Captain Torrey said, "Make him comfortable, Grady; he's all in." To Traffic Officer Murphy and the plain-clothes man he said, as the door closed on the prisoner, "Well, boys, a good night's work," and held out the signature for their inspection. "You might witness," he suggested, and each in turn signed his name as witness, and each in turn sighed. The plain-clothes man also read over that portion of the

confession which had to do with the smuggler in New Hampshire. "There 's no lead here," he said disgustedly. "Jerry's girl wrote him when she turned him down that the fellow had skipped. It 's less than an hour by train or motor from there to the Canadian line. I 'll wire the police in the morning, but Colby's our only chance now."

"Colby 's cleared out," said Captain Torrey. "I called at his mother's house this evening to sympathize with her, and when I got it through her head that if he put the ocean between him and Hawthorne we should n't go to the expense of extraditing him for failing to deliver illegal hooch, she showed me a note someone had brought her from Boston this afternoon. Jimmie wrote her he was on a sailing vessel just off for South America and round the Horn to Australia. We verified the boat and it sailed early this —yesterday — morning. Lucky kid. His mother told me it was she discovered the fake milk-bottles in his room and made him unload them on Pike."

"So I 've tied my last carnation for Winter-



bury," said the plain-clothes man. "Good night!" and let himself out of the door.

"Well, Murphy," said Captain Torrey, left alone with his chief Traffic Officer. "You're a wonder. I'll have to hand it to you. If he had n't confessed, we'd be up against it, sure. We could n't hold him for stealing his own mortgaged car, and we could n't hold him for talking about milk bottles and delivery with Jimmie Colby under Miss Farwell's window. And we could n't hold him for walking across Emerson Road bridge with a suitcase. Of course we found the Ford by the road —"

"But there was n't any liquor in it," Officer Murphy interrupted; "the bottles were in the field, empty."

"The only thing that does n't check up is these finger prints," said Captain Torrey. He lifted from his desk a plaster mould of the ten finger tips which he had cut out of Alcott Street nearly six weeks before. "They're not his." The two men compared them with a thumb print taken within the hour from Jerry Pike's thumb.

"See how much bigger his is," said Officer Murphy. "Maybe they're the girl's. Maybe they're Miss Patty's."

"That's so," agreed Captain Torrey. "Make a dandy paper weight, don't they! When do you want your leave?"

Officer Murphy thought he'd like to take it pretty soon after Christmas, if that would n't be inconvenient.

"Suit yourself," said Captain Torrey. "You've earned it. Where you going?"

"Between ourselves," said Officer Murphy, "and I'll ask you not to say anything about it, I'm going to the Fourth Dimension."

Later that day, Dr. Thorpe, crossing the Square when traffic was light, stopped a moment beside Traffic Officer Murphy's pulpit to congratulate him on his brilliant achievement.

"Achievement, is it!" said Officer Murphy, who was suffering from loss of sleep. "When them that are responsible for this bootlegging go free? Yes, free they are, and I can feel them grinning anonymous behind my back whichever way I turn. For you know as

well as I do, Dr. Thorpe, that it's not the boot-legger that's to blame, nor his go-betweens like that poor fool I scared half to death last night, nor Jimmie Colby that's been driven off to God knows where. It's them that put up the money for the stuff that's to blame. You know them and I know them, but Jimmie Colby has gone off with their names in his pocket."

And Dr. Thorpe, paraphrasing a familiar poem, murmured : —

"They can disappear,  
And no one knows that they have gone."

Officer Murphy released the south-going traffic with his right arm and leaned to catch Dr. Thorpe's remarks.

"No one knows," the Doctor continued, "for we shall continue to greet one another on the street, in the church door, by these names that have vanished into — the Fourth Dimension."

Officer Murphy beckoned the west-bound traffic on, and halted north and south.

"How happy we all must be," mused Dr.

Thorpe, watching the traffic stream by, "how happy we all must be to know that the boy who delivered the milk for Hornbeam Farm has escaped the limiting environment, the narrow outlook, the petty temptations of our sophisticated twentieth-century village life, and turned his face to wild, free, pioneer peril —"

Officer Murphy halted east and west automatically, and regarded the Doctor speculatively with a downward, sidewise glance.

"The remote, the mysterious," Dr. Thorpe continued, "the remote, the mysterious, have swallowed up this youth who will never again leave milk, or less innocent beverages, at our kitchen doors; have swallowed up this youth, and with him the names of certain customers of his —"

Officer Murphy, observing Miss Patience Farwell poised hesitant upon the eastern corner of the Square, halted the traffic going and coming, north, south, east, and west, and beckoned her benevolently to approach.

"Less innocent beverages, in whited sepulchres," murmured Dr. Thorpe. "Oh, good

morning, Miss Farwell. Let me see you across." And over his shoulder to the Traffic Officer he called, "You 've given me a text for my next Sunday's sermon, Murphy. Many thanks!"

By common consent the following Sunday was observed in Hawthorne as Bootlegger's Sunday. Dr. Thorpe's sermon developed the thesis: "Wine is a mocker."

## CHAPTER XV

MISS ARMITAGE was packing her trunk to attend a convention of College and University Presidents in the South, when her private secretary looked into the room to say that Miss Patience Farwell would be greatly obliged if the President would see her for perhaps half an hour sometime during the day. She could suit the President's convenience as to time, and would come to the office or to the President's house.

"Tell Miss Farwell," said Miss Armitage, "that I could n't think of bringing her out on such a cold day. I shall be happy to call on her at her apartment this afternoon at four o'clock."

And at four o'clock she was sitting before Miss Farwell's fire, taking a cup of tea and graciously waiting for the little old lady to come to her point.

"I don't really think there's anything in it," said Miss Farwell. "It's too much of a

coincidence to be a clue. It's only in detective stories that the clue and the coincidence coincide. And in some ways this may not be a coincidence at all. Indeed, in some ways it does n't fit in the least. But then in some ways it does. It was so kind of you to come, dear Miss Armitage. I'm distressed to have had you take the trouble, and you may think it has no significance whatever. But I thought I would rather talk it over with another woman. Dr. Thorpe has been so kind; no one could have been kinder; but — well, you'll see, when I read the letter."

"Is it an anonymous letter?" asked Miss Armitage.

"Oh, no! No, indeed! Nothing of that kind. It's from my old friend Adeline Murray, Adeline Bruce that was. We were girls together in Bath. You knew I was from Maine, Miss Armitage? Yes, Maine. Addie and I were at the Academy together. Girls did n't go to college in those days." She paused, smiling reminiscently into the fire. "Addie was President of the Temperance Society. She's worked for temperance



all her life long. I remember when the Amendment was passed, she wrote me, 'Othello's occupation's gone.' Addie was always very sanguine." There was another smiling pause for reverie.

"You had written Mrs. Murray about Patty?" suggested Miss Armitage.

"No. As it happens, I had n't. We don't write with any regularity, Addie and I. She married, you see. Evan Murray of Augusta. Dr. Evan Murray. One of our foremost Maine physicians Evan is — was. You may have heard of him? Called in consultation to Portland more than once. Oh, any number of times. Addie's very proud of him." Again the little firelit pause. "Evan retired last September. Disposed of his practice. Addie wrote me at the time. Said they were going South for the winter in their car. Just he and she — a second honeymoon. She said she'd let me know when, as they expected to stop over at Margie's little house by the water in Savin Hill for two or three days, and I must come for an afternoon. Margie's her widowed daughter, in Europe this year with

the two grandchildren. I thought at the time that she did n't realize what a jaunt it would be for me, just for an afternoon; I hardly thought I should go. And now this letter comes. I'll read it, shall I?" Miss Farwell adjusted her spectacles and cleared her throat delicately: —

"Dear Pat." The bright old eyes twinkled demurely over the spectacles at Miss Armitage, then returned without comment to the page.

DEAR PAT, —

You must be wondering what has become of us, and I did mean to write you before we left Augusta, but we lingered at home longer than we had intended, because of the open winter, and then started off in a whirl at a moment's notice. You know what Evan is when he makes up his mind. ["I do," commented Miss Farwell, "and very wrong-headed sometimes."] Then we were n't sure just what day we should reach Margie's, as Jamie insisted on our stopping at Portland. ["Jamie's the second son. The eldest is in Seattle, or is it Spokane? — Well, no matter."] And Evan wanted to see his Aunt Hetty at Kennebunkport. She's ninety-nine, in her hundredth year, and

one never knows what may happen at that age. You remember Aunt Hetty, Pat? ["Yes, I remember," murmured Miss Farwell.] We shall never regret that we stopped, for she had a very severe attack of colic while we were there. But Evan brought her round. Evan didn't call it colic, but I can't remember these newfangled medical terms, and it was a pain in her stomach anyway. ["Addie always did write a chatty letter," said Miss Farwell.] So it seemed best to wait till we got to Margie's and then telephone or telegraph and have you in for the day. But we had an adventure and it upset everything.

We took short cuts, though I warned Evan it was a risk. And we got completely lost and didn't know where we were. Evan had his mind made up to get to Savin Hill without going through Boston, and of course I knew we should never do that; but we went all round Robin Hood's barn before we got to Scollay Square. And we were hours later than we ought to have been, getting to Savin Hill. Fortunately we had a key to Margie's little house. But that was only part of the adventure.

Somewhere, but don't ask me where, — we are still muddled about it, — we ran into a young girl. We were going at Evan's most reckless

speed, — he was annoyed, as you can imagine, at having lost his way, — and the girl must have been cranking her own little car, for she was directly in front of it. And we are convinced that no judge would have decided against us in any court, for the car was not parked in a proper place at all. But I never expect to pass through a more terrible moment. We thought we had killed her. But God was merciful. It was a severe concussion.

Then, trying to find out where she came from, we discovered that she was on a very questionable errand *indeed*. However, we think it best not to say anything about that now, for the girl's sake. And as Evan said at the time, if we had let ourselves get mixed up in that kind of mess we might have been delayed in Massachusetts all winter. I will explain the nature of the mess when I see you, dear Pat, but Evan thinks that as long as we did n't report it to the proper authorities at the time, we should n't write about it too freely now. ["Addie's not as lucid as usual along here," said Miss Farwell. The President of the College, more accustomed to the divagations of the self-deceived, read between the lines and thought she obtained a fairly clear picture of the state of mind of Dr. Murray and his wife.] So instead of taking the girl to a hospital, as we might have done under

ordinary circumstances, we took her to Margie's, thinking of course that when she recovered consciousness and could tell us who she was, we should send her home to her people, with a warning. But — and this is the most amazing thing in the whole adventure — when she came to herself she did n't know who she was, did n't know her own name, did n't know anything. Something had happened to her memory.

And all we know about the dear girl, for she *is* a dear girl, in spite of everything, is that she comes from New Hampshire, and she has a *Past*. [Miss Patty read this awful word in a voice as bass as she could make it, and her eyes said unspeakable things to the President of the College, who murmured, "I wonder how they know."] If we had had any idea that she would have amnesia we should *of course* have taken her to a hospital in the first place. But we thought we were doing the kindest thing, and Evan does so hate the red tape of the law.

Evan says this loss of memory after a blow on the head is not unprecedented, and that she will remember in time. But she has n't yet. Living with the child from day to day, I blame, not her but the wicked people who lured her into a life of sin. And I dread the moment when all that she

has so blessedly forgotten will rise again to veil the virginal spirit that now looks out of her eyes.

But you can understand why we did n't let you know we were in Savin Hill. The girl did n't recover consciousness for twenty-four hours, and we were too anxious and busy to think about anything else. Then when we found the child had lost her memory we had to consider what to do. But Evan felt that if the girl's people were a bad lot, they deserved to be anxious about her for a while, so we talked the matter over with her and suggested that she come South with us to recover from the shock, as our guest. And she came.

What a strange thing is the human mind! You may recall those celebrated cases of double personality that were so much talked of several years ago. This reminds us of them, for you would never know, even living intimately with this child as we do, that her other self had — but no; I promised Evan I would n't speak of it. We can't think where the man could have been, for there must have been a man with her. She could n't have been carrying out the affair alone. But no one else appeared. He may have been afraid to reveal himself when he saw us. The wretch! I think, to tell you the truth, that Evan's conscience troubles him because we did n't go at once



to the police station and report the case, even though we should undoubtedly have been delayed as witnesses, not to mention a fine for running into the girl and the other car, though there we both feel sure that we were in the right; no judge *could* have given a verdict against us. But I say boldly, recklessly, — you know what I am, Pat, — that I'm glad we did n't report it. Law or no law, the saving of the girl's soul is the chief thing to be considered.

I've scribbled on this long letter from day to day as we've gone farther and farther South, choosing sweet shaded side-roads when possible, and camping in fields at night. The girl is recovering her tone admirably. I have ventured to talk to her about her Past, though Evan did n't advise it, and she has responded so sweetly and normally; she is even quite merry about it at times, and I am glad she does n't realize how very serious it really is. Evan is devoted to her. She sits on the front seat with him most of the time and they chatter away at a great rate.

We expect to be in New Orleans sometime early in the New Year — on New Year's Day itself, Evan says, but we seldom do arrive when he expects to. Letters are forwarded from Augusta, but necessarily at irregular intervals. I hardly



think it will be worth your while to answer this till you hear from me again. Our route is very flexible. Evan is stopping at a post office and wants to mail this with several others, so I must close, with love from

Your old schoolmate and friend,

ADDIE

For a few minutes the two women sat in silence, looking into the fire.

"If it were your niece, might not the name Murray recall something to her?" asked Miss Armitage presently.

"I don't believe so. Patty has never been to Maine with me. And Addie's letters and mine were never regular."

"I am glad," said Miss Armitage dryly, "that Dr. Murray's conscience troubles him."

"My Patty does n't come from New Hampshire, and she has n't a Past — praised be! Though how they know she comes from New Hampshire, if she's forgotten where she came from, I don't see," said Miss Farwell.

"And where does the Poet come in?" said Miss Armitage.

"True," Miss Farwell admitted apologeti-

cally. "I'm always forgetting that the Poet has disappeared, too."

"It is certainly a coincidence," mused Miss Armitage.

"But then, if Evan Murray and his wife have carried off my Patty and she has lost her memory," said Miss Farwell, "how can she be sending those messages to the Lost and Found column? Unless she is pretending to have lost her memory, like the man in that terrible Pirandello play, who kept on pretending he was mad when he was n't. That was the last play Patty and I saw together. But it does n't seem like my little girl to carry a joke as far as that."

"Still, we must use all the data we can accumulate," said Miss Armitage. "I want you to give me Mrs. Murray's Augusta address, if you will, Miss Patience. I'm leaving for the South to-morrow and I may run across them. It will do no harm to have a look at the young lady with a Past from New Hampshire, even though she should n't turn out to be your Patty. There was no mention of a leopard-skin jacket and a fawn-colored hat?"

"No. But Addie never thinks to mention clothes. When her own Margie was married she never described her wedding gown. I don't know to this day whether it was satin or silk."

"I understand that you have n't spoken of this letter to anyone, Miss Patience," said the President of the College. "I wonder if you would mind not mentioning it anywhere until I have a chance to investigate a little? So many of the clues that the police have followed up have turned out to be nothing at all, and each new one seems to make us out more foolish than the last."

"I know," agreed Miss Patience. "And when all is said, the things that really give me confidence are these Lost and Found notices."

Miss Armitage and Miss Carter, traveling together as far as Washington, on the Federal Express, confessed to each other a certain relief in escaping from the atmosphere of sanity which had pervaded the College since Thanksgiving Day. Miss Armitage also confessed that she hoped she had a clue, but would

rather not talk about it till she had followed it a bit farther.

"Followed it? You mean geographically, or introspectively?" asked Miss Carter.

"Both. I may run down to New Orleans when the conference in Thomasville is over."

"I had thought a little of going to New Orleans," said Miss Carter. "Annice Gould, Nineteen-sixteen, that pretty Southern girl, you remember, has been begging me for two winters to make her a visit."

"Why don't you?" said Miss Armitage. "And then we could come home together."

And Miss Carter said perhaps she would, if her cousins in Asheville, with whom she was spending her Christmas, did n't insist on keeping her for the whole vacation.

## CHAPTER XVI

ADVENTURE next befell Willie Penfield. Adventure incog., unrecognized, vanishing just as Willie awoke to its significance. When he leaped to grasp its tail, it was gone.

If anything could have developed an inferiority complex in Willie Penfield, this adventure manqué would have done so. "How would I know?" he cried, when his parents reproached him and the Scouts jeered. "How would I guess? I never saw him that time he was here. And besides, he'd grown whiskers. Things don't happen like that; it's not natural."

"Except when they do happen," his mother commented dryly.

The day after Christmas, Mr. Valentine took his Boy Scouts for a week of camping in the Berkshires. A friend of Mr. Valentine's had lent him a camp, and as it snowed on Christmas Eve and all Christmas Day, and Santa Claus thoughtfully provided skis or

skates and sometimes both for most of the Scouts, the excitement of the troupe beggars description. Willie's one picture postcard to his mother conveyed his enthusiasm all too feebly. Crowding his words economically round the edges of the card, he wrote : —

If you don't hear from me again it 's because I 'm so busy. This is Greylock. Some hill. Camp is great. We sleep in built-in bunks. We rode ten miles from station in a pung. I go to the farm for our milk. Jimmie Colby's job. O Boy. I feel fine and dandy. W. P.

It was the second time he went for the milk that the invisible adventure befell. He was too early, and the farmer's wife said :

"I can't have you round under my feet when I 'm busy. Go into the sittin'-room and talk to the boarder. He 's lonesome."

"I 'd ruther learn to milk a cow," said Willie.

"Well, I have n't time to learn you," said the farmer's wife. "Go on in. He won't eat you. He 's gettin' over a broken leg."

And Willie sidled reluctantly out of the kitchen and along the hall to the sittin'-room.

As he approached the half open door, he heard the boarder chanting to himself, not very loud, but loud enough : —

“The world is deaf, little darling,

Deaf and doddering.

Why should I raise my voice to my grandmother?”

It scared Willie, especially the part about the grandmother, passionately rendered. He thought the boarder was crazy. He tiptoed to the door and looked through the crack. The boarder was lying on the sofa beside the air-tight stove. He had a great deal of untidy bright-yellow whisker around his face, and he was running his hands through his long, bright, disheveled locks.

“He sure does need a haircut,” thought Willie, gazing, fascinated.

“If you hear me it is enough,”

chanted the boarder.

“If you hear me it is enough.

O little darling! Listen in!

Listen in!”

Then he caught Willie’s eye at the crack and paused abruptly, and Willie came round



the edge of the door, half sheepish, half terror-struck. The boarder's face, what you could see of it between the whiskers and under the thatch, turned bright pink, but his blue eyes twinkled and he laughed a fine brave laugh, as if he were somehow carrying off an embarrassing situation.

"So you thought you would, little darling?" he said.

"Would what?" stammered Willie.

"Listen in."

Willie grinned and shuffled his feet.

"A Boy Scout," said the boarder. "Oh, yes; from the camp?"

"I 've come for the milk," Willie explained, "and I 'm early. She told me to come in here."

"I 'll bet she said I was lonesome," said the boarder.

Willie grinned again.

"Well, here 's your chance to do your good deed: see if you can cheer me up."

"I hope your leg 's better," said Willie politely.

"Oh, the leg 's all right; this is the sixth

week." The boarder reached down for a cane on the floor beside him, hoisted himself to his feet, and walked across the floor and back, with the cane and a slight limp.

"How 'd you break it?" asked Willie.

"Playing the fool," said the boarder.

"Where do you hail from?"

"Hawthorne, Mass.," said Willie.

"Hawthorne, Mass.!" The boarder repeated the name after him, and stared as if it were a strange place for a Boy Scout to come from. "Hawthorne, Mass.?"

"Yep, where the girls' college is. Dickinson College."

"Dickinson — of course," said the boarder hastily. "I 've known some of the Dickinson girls." There was a pause, and he added, "What 's been happening there lately?"

"Have n't you heard?" cried Willie.

"Heard!" retorted the boarder. "I was too sick to see a paper for the first two weeks, and since then there 's been only the little local sheet and an agricultural journal. This man has n't even a radio."

"Say!" said Willie. "You must be the only person in the United States that does n't know. Are you kiddin' me?"

"Kidding you? Not much! Tune in, old chap. I'm consumed with curiosity."

"You have n't heard about the girl that's disappeared from Hawthorne?"

"Girl?" exclaimed the boarder.

"Miss Patty Farwell, that runs the Community Bookshop. The night before the Football Game."

"Disappeared?" the boarder ejaculated. "You don't mean they have n't found her? Why, that's six weeks ago, almost. Why!" The boarder, all tumbled and golden-hairy, stared wildly at Willie Penfield.

"At first they thought she eloped with the Poet," said Willie. "But now they know she could n't, because she and the Poet are communicatin' with each other through the Lost and Found columns."

The boarder reached up and yanked Willie down beside him on the sofa: "Sit here, young Scout, and tell it straight. Begin at the beginning," he said.

So Willie began, the boarder hanging on his words: —

“There was a Poet read in our Bookshop, something about disappearing, and they said what a good ad that would be for the Shop if somebody disappeared. And since twenty minutes to eleven that night nobody has seen that Poet or Miss Patty either.”

“You can’t mean *both*,” said the boarder. He was staring wildly out of his golden ambush.

“Sure, I mean both,” said Willie. “And they thought they had eloped — for a joke, you know. Some people still think it’s a joke. But my mother thinks the bootlegger got Miss Patty.”

“Jupiter, but you’re lucid!” groaned the boarder.

“He’s confessed,” Willie explained, “but my mother thinks he’s afraid to tell that. She’s after my father to dig up the Bookshop cellar and make sure.”

“You don’t mean — you can’t possibly be sitting here calmly telling me — ” The boarder grasped Willie Penfield by the shoulders, and shook him.

"I'm amusing him a lot," thought Willie; and aloud: "The bootlegger swears he did n't. But there was her slipper in the middle of the road, where the Ford was wrecked. But the bootlegger says the old lady and gentleman in the Pierce-Arrow kidnapped her. And that's what my father thinks. And that's what I think. But my mother —"

"Murdered — kidnapped — Young fella, if you're pulling my leg —"

"Me?" said Willie. "Well, you can ask Traffic Officer Murphy. He saw the old lady and gentleman; they drove right by him in the Square. And the girl had on a leopard-skin coat, just like Miss Patty. Only her face was hid."

"And he let them by?" cried the boarder.

"But that was before they knew she had disappeared," Willie explained carefully. "And my father, and I, and her aunt, we're sure she's alive, because she's calling the Poet through the Lost and Found columns to come and rescue her."

"Calling!" gasped the boarder, running both hands through his hair. "Calling?"

"Look at here," said Willie, "I'll show you," and he took a newspaper clipping out of his jacket and unfolded it on the boarder's knee. "*Town and Gown*, — that's our paper, — prints the complete list from all the other papers, every week. This is the last. You begin here. These are hers and these are his."

"His?" said the boarder.

"The Poet's," explained Willie.

"The Poet's?" said the boarder, more and more bemused.

"Why, yes. The Poet spoke first, don't you see? He wanted to know where she was. After the papers had said they had disappeared. So he advertised in the *Lost and Found*. And then she answered him. And then he answered her. And then —"

"Let me read them through," said the boarder.

"The woman that keeps this farm has just looked in for me to take the milk to camp," said Willie.

"Well, you can't go till I read these," said the boarder. And he went through the messages twice.

## A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY

1. To whom it may concern. We gave each other rendezvous in the Fourth Dimension. Have you forgotten?

3. Guide me!

5. Sorry. It's raised to the *n*th now, but vibrations curve more here.

"Rescue me thou, the only real!  
And scare away this mad Ideal  
That came, nor motions to depart!"

7. A Poet whose name I won't mention  
Respectfully calls your attention  
To the uncharted mazes,  
The fogs and the hazes,  
That obtain in this durned Fourth  
Dimension.

O Patience, O sweet Condescension,  
Delay not your dear intervention!  
Unravel the clue  
To the lost Rendezvous  
In this blankety-blank Fourth Di-  
mension.

9. So glad it's South. I forgot to bring my overcoat.

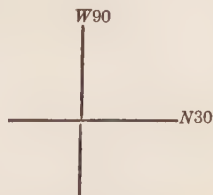
2. Sorry, when I pranced through, I lost my slipper. It hampers me.

4. I'm awfully afraid you'll have to raise your voice.

6. That was Browning's voice, not yours.

8. When the day comes, and the hour, but not yet. Follow any two curving parallel lines to their point of intersection in time, preferably going South. If you haven't your Einstein with you, try a railway guide. Remember! Time is a mode of Space, and there is no time like the present; but to waste time by being ahead of time is to offend the Time Spirit.

10.



Seek the triangle within the crescent by the shores of the Father of Waters. Follow the Muse of History to her tryst with the Apostle to the Gentiles chaperoned by the old lady in the crocheted shawl whose password is the cry of Matthew Arnold's Forsaken Merman. The time appointed is New Year's Day. If not before noon, then after.



At numbers 5 and 6 the boarder laughed. Number 7 he read aloud in a voice amazed. At number 9 Willie volunteered that the railroad had found the Poet's overcoat and the police were keeping it with his suitcase.

"I see," said the boarder. "He seems to have been all kinds of a fool."

"Yes, don't he?" agreed Willie.

Numbers 8 and 10 the boarder read very slowly and thoughtfully: "This is certainly an S. O. S. call," he said after a second reading. "The Father of Waters and Matthew Arnold's Forsaken Merman. And what in thunder are these skewy points of the compass — *W* at the top and *N* at the east?"

"There 's a reward offered for her," said Willie. "Five thousand dollars. Gee! If I had five thousand dollars —"

"And how much for him?" inquired the boarder.

"Oh, he ain't even a mark-down," said Willie gayly. "Nothing doing."

The farmer's wife came in just then with a large parcel-post package. To the boarder she said, "I guess these are your new clothes."

To Willie she said pointedly, "They 'll be wonderin' where you are. I 've put the two pails of milk on the sled, so you can haul it easier."

"Just in the nick of time!" cried the boarder, wrestling with the knots of his package. "And there 's a pair of trousers here for your husband, and shirts, he 's been so kind."

## CHAPTER XVII

REVELATION came to Willie when he went for the milk next morning and the farmer's wife handed him an unsealed letter to post for the boarder.

"He said for you to read it and you'd understand," she explained. "He copied the verse out of gran'ma's old Shakespeare."

The envelope was addressed to :—

THE LOST AND FOUND COLUMN,  
THE NEW YORK TIMES,  
NEW YORK CITY.

"Oh!" cried Willie, blinded by a great light. "Oh! Oh!" And then, "He was bluffing. He acted as if he'd never read them before!"

Willie drew out the slip of paper from the envelope. The message was brief. He read it aloud, dazedly :—

"I go, I go; look how I go;  
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow."

"Yes, he went," said the farmer's wife, casually. "Tom drove him to Pittsfield before daylight to catch the milk train. Said to tell you if he got the reward he'd divide it with you. Some of his foolishness, I guess."

If Willie Penfield had n't been a Boy Scout, hardened by the disciplines of that organization, he would undoubtedly have shed tears. Instead, with admirable reticence and self-control, he slipped the quotation from *Midsummer Night's Dream* back into the envelope, licked the flap, and put the envelope into his pocket. He then asked the farmer's wife if he might use her telephone, and when she, somewhat awed by his stern preoccupation, gave him permission, he put in a long distance call for his mother.

"What about the milk?" asked the farmer's wife. "You was late takin' it last night, and now you'll be late again this morning."

But Willie, absorbed in thought, made no reply. It was then half past seven.

At nine o'clock, in Hawthorne, Mrs. Penfield was at the door of the police station with

her news. Captain Torrey and Traffic Officer Murphy — who was reporting for leave of absence from noon of that day — heard her through attentively.

“Of course, it might not be the Poet at all,” said Captain Torrey, skeptically. “It might be some other joker butting in to try for the reward. He acted as if he ’d never seen those Lost-and-Founds before — was n’t that what Willie said, Mrs. Penfield?”

“But Willie ’s sure it is, and so am I,” said Willie’s mother. “Poor kid, he ’s taking it very hard. ‘Ma,’ he says through the phone, ‘if I ’d only known that was poetry he was saying about his grandmother, I ’d have guessed. But how was I to know?’ And how was he?” Mrs. Penfield suddenly leaned over to examine the large and peculiar paper weight on Captain Torrey’s broad flat-top desk.

“He ’ll take the Federal Express out of Boston for Washington, to-night,” said Officer Murphy, “whoever he is,” and gazed fixedly and significantly into the eyes of Captain Torrey for as much as thirty seconds.

Mrs. Penfield took the paper weight in her two hands and scrutinized it closely, her mouth slowly opening and shutting and opening again.

"Be careful," said Captain Torrey, "it's only plaster."

"For the land's sake," she cried. "What do you want of my Willie's paws?"

Captain Torrey bounded in his chair. Officer Murphy exploded — one guffaw.

"Your Willie's?" gasped the Captain. "How do you know?"

"Well, how *do* I know?" she retorted with nice irony. "Ain't I his mother? Have n't I washed his hands, and smacked his hands, and cut his nails, and bound up his sore fingers, ever since he was born? That's Willie's thumb."

"I believe you, Mrs. Penfield," said Captain Torrey humbly. "Just for form's sake we'll have Willie in and verify them when he comes home. But I believe you."

"Finger prints!" flashed Mrs. Penfield. "Well, I will say, Captain Torrey, I did n't think you'd insult Joe and me like that."

"Now, Mrs. Penfield, now," admonished Captain Torrey, "how could I insult you if I did n't know they were his?"

"Then what are they here for?"

"For ornament. Don't they look fine on my desk? Hands of a young American citizen. We found them one day in the mud, and they were so pretty we took them up and made a mould of them to add to our collection."

"In the mud?"

"At the edge of that wet spot where the Ford was wrecked. Now do you blame us, Mrs. Penfield?"

She began to laugh then. She laughed and laughed, and so did they. "I remember now," she exclaimed, "and you sitting up in the runabout with a mud pie on your knees. Well, I will say, Cap'n Torrey, it's not often the joke is on you, but this is too good to keep. I can't wait to tell Joe."

"If it was only Joe," said Captain Torrey ruefully, when she had gone. "Well, Murphy, good luck to you! I expect you to cover the Hawthorne police force with glory when you get back. I'm not asking any questions of a



man on his vacation, but what do you think of the triangle within the crescent?"

"It ought to mean the Y. M. C. A. in Turkey," said Officer Murphy, "but of course it don't — not on the shores of the Father of Waters. I remember that old fellow from grammar school."

"And those points of the compass with west at the top and north at the east?"

Officer Murphy's eyes gleamed. "I've got my own ideas about that," he said discreetly. "And I've bought me a copy of Matthew Arnold's *Poems* from the Bookshop, to read on the train."

"Well," said the Captain, "I understand the air in the South is balmy, this time of year. Don't let it go to your head. All I can say is, it's time somebody called this bluff. Poet or no Poet, I hope you beat him to it."

## CHAPTER XVIII

THE Poet turned into Clio Street from St. Charles Avenue and walked south on the right-hand side, a bit stiffly, with a cane. Somewhere between the Berkshires and Lat.  $30^{\circ}$  North, Lon.  $90^{\circ}$  West, he had discarded his golden fleece and acquired socks and a necktie to match his eyes. At the corner of Clio and Prytania Streets he paused and looked about him cursorily. The front steps of the corner house at his right hand came down to the street between blocks of granite, themselves gigantic steps, two on each side. On the side next to Clio Street, an undersized messenger boy was disporting himself, jumping from the upper granite block to the lower, and from the lower to the pavement, then running up the steps to begin again. On the other side, upon the lower granite block, a robust man sat, lightly swinging his substantial legs.

Seizing the interim moment, after the messenger boy had leaped to the pavement

and before he had climbed again to the upper block of granite, the Poet hastily spread out on the lower granite block, the one not occupied by the robust man with the pendulous but substantial legs, a map of New Orleans. The messenger boy almost jumped on it, but saved himself — and it — just in time. Settling to his knees and hands on the upper block, he peered down over the Poet's head, and followed the Poet's finger as it traced a route on the map.

"I beg pardon, but can you tell me the name of the church over there, with the tall stone tower?" the Poet asked the robust man.

"I only got here this morning. I'm a tourist," the robust man replied, noncommittally.

"Saint Paul's," volunteered the messenger boy.

"Apostle to the Gentiles," murmured the Poet, "Clio, Muse of History." And folding up his map, he stood beside the granite steps, leaning on his cane and studying the scene.

Between him and the tall square tower of St. Paul's a small city park glowed in the mild, bright, January day, a triangular oasis of

palm trees and green lawn, with a neat path leading over a tiny arched bridge to the white statue of the tutelary genius.

"Who's the quaint little pudgy old lady with the shoulder-shawl, sitting over there in marble?" the Poet asked.

"That's Margaret," said the messenger boy.

The effect upon the Poet was extraordinary. "The password!" he exclaimed. "Margaret! Margaret!" And he laughed aloud on the street corner.

    "Call her once before you go —  
    Call once yet!  
    In a voice that she will know:  
    Margaret! Margaret!"

chanted the Poet in a sort of ecstasy, and abandoned himself to mirth.

"Y' awl kin laff, Mister," said the messenger boy resentfully, "but that ole lady was a mighty good ole lady."

The Poet looked up over his shoulder at the insulted Southerner. "Oh, kid," he said contritely, "I'm sorry. But I'm not laughing at her. She's distinguished. She's a

little old dear. I don't know when I've seen a more charming example of genre art. I'm laughing — well, at something she does n't remind me of."

"Her name's Haughery," said the messenger boy with dignity. "Margaret Haughery; and she was mighty good to the orphans."

But the Poet was crossing Prytania Street and Clio diagonally. He had caught sight of a blue dress between the stems of the palm trees beyond the statue.

"I bet they ain't any lady up Nawth kin hol' a cannle to her," the messenger boy called after him. "All ole maids!"

"Cut it out, kid," said the robust man. "I'm not paying you to shoot your lip at the foot traffic."

Coming around the base of Margaret's statue, the Poet and a lady in blue met abruptly, face to face.

"How do you do, Mr. Slocumbe?" said Miss Armitage, tranquilly, offering her hand.

"How do you do, Miss Armitage?" stammered the Poet, lifting his hat and taking the hand. But his glance strayed beyond her.

"She is n't here, yet," said the President of the College.

"She 's coming?"

"I 'm sure I hope so. We 've had our anxious moments, Mr. Slocumbe."

"You did n't think I had anything to do with *her* disappearance?"

"Not after you began to send your messages to the Lost and Found columns."

The Poet hesitated, looked away, looked back again, and met Miss Armitage's mildly disciplinary eye. "Would you mind if we sat down?" he said. "I broke my leg awhile back and it still bothers me a little."

"I 've been sitting here, on the low parapet of this little bridge," said the President of the College.

So they sat down under the palm trees, in the soft January sunshine of the Crescent City, and were silent a moment.

"I 'm very sorry about your leg," said Miss Armitage presently. "How did you do it?"

The Poet drew a long breath. "Suppose I tell you all about it?" he suggested — not too eagerly.

"Suppose you do," she acquiesced — not too eagerly.

And the Poet, leaning his chin on his knuckles on the top of his walking stick, began, in profile: —

"You 'll think me all sorts of an ass. It was just an impulse, and I acted on it. I was standing on the bridge, looking down the railroad tracks. And I was tired. I'm always tired after I read my verses. It — it discourages me."

Miss Armitage studied the Poet's profile sympathetically.

And he went on: "I thought, What would happen if I did disappear? I wondered if I could really disappear. Would anybody care? Perhaps people would read my verse if I disappeared. Not just buy it; but *read* it — attend to it. *Hear* it. Perhaps if I could get away by myself, away from the little self-conscious crowd I run with, away from the young modern poets' mutual admiration society that touts for me, I might write something that — that would n't discourage me when I raised my voice. And there was a freight



train coming, and before I knew what I was doing, impulse got away with me, and I ran out on the stone pier of the bridge and jumped down on top of a car." He threw his head back and laughed. "It was full of pigs, and it had openwork sides."

"And," remarked the President of the College, "you said, 'Hell! What a smell!'"

"Heavens!" cried the Poet, and stared at her, awe-stricken. "How do you know? Did you get it on the radio?"

Miss Armitage explained; and again resting his chin on his knuckles on the top of his walking stick, he took up his tale: "I did n't dare walk along the top of the train for fear the trainmen would hear me or spot me. I was new to it, you see. But we slowed up once, and I climbed down the openwork of the car, with two tiers of pigs rooting at my hands and feet. And my clothes were all slimed over, down the front."

"I've seen the overcoat," said Miss Armitage.

"The front of the dinner jacket was worse," said the Poet, "because the overcoat was open.

And I tore my trousers and had just time to crawl into an empty car, and I rolled up in a corner till daylight. I think I slept some, but when the sun came up and we were in the Berkshires, the hills looked so lovely in the early light, the solitude was so — so comforting, I said, Why don't I get off here? And I jumped. But the train must have been going faster than I thought, and besides, something caught my dinner jacket and ripped it up the back. And I fell with my left leg under me and snapped it."

"Oh, poor boy!" said Miss Armitage.

"I managed to drag myself off the tracks and into a field, and then I fainted. And in the middle of the morning I heard somebody driving by on the road at one side of the field, and I called out, and a farmer heard me and took me home, five miles in a rickety little Ford truck. And they got a nice old country doctor for me, to set my leg. They said I was quite sick for a couple of weeks. I only left there four days ago."

"Why did n't you let someone know!" cried the President of the College, remorsefully.

"Would you, if it had been your adventure?"

She laughed. "No, I don't believe I should. But still, was it fair to let your friends worry?"

"They don't seem to have worried much," he said, quietly. "And I've had a bully good time. I've written a lot, and thought a lot —"

The President of the College again studied his profile sympathetically.

"Don't you think it's about time she appeared?" said the Poet, turning his chin on his knuckles to look at his companion. "You don't think this is a ruse for ransom? What do you know about it, Miss Armitage?"

And the President of the College told him the story of Patty Farwell's disappearance so far as she knew it. "I've written this Dr. Murray twice, explaining our hopes to him, but he has been on the go and I could n't be sure of finding him. Yesterday, however, this telegram came from him." She unfolded the yellow paper and handed it to the Poet, who read : —

## A BOOKSHOP MYSTERY

---

THINK YOU MUST BE RIGHT SHALL SAY NOTHING TO GIRL BUT HOPE TO BRING HER TO NEW ORLEANS JANUARY FIRST

EVAN MURRAY

"I wired him to come to this place," said Miss Armitage, "this forenoon, if possible."

The Poet was puzzled about something. His brows were knit and he pondered silently, turning the telegram over and over in his fingers.

"Good morning, friends," said the mocking voice of the little Masefield Professor of Poetry. "You don't know how idyllic you look in this park among the palm trees, chaperoned" — she chuckled — "by the little old woman in the crocheted shawl."

"Oh, you did get here!" cried the President of the College. "I was hoping you would."

"My cousin in Asheville was full of reproaches. But that last call in the Lost and Found was too alluring: I simply could n't stay away. 'Margaret! Margaret!'" The Masefield Professor of Poetry repeated the password from Matthew Arnold's "Forsaken Merman" with delighted chuckles, and sat

down on the other parapet of the little bridge, opposite the President of the College.

The Poet had risen to greet her, and he now stood on the little bridge, between the two ladies. "But I don't understand," he said to the President of the College. "If Miss Farwell is suffering from a loss of memory, if she has forgotten who she is, how can she have written the messages in the Lost and Found?"

"Forgotten who she is?" cried Miss Carter.

"Oh, you don't know, of course," said Miss Armitage to her colleague. "I did n't speak of it before I left." And she told Miss Carter about Miss Patience Farwell's old school friend, Adeline Murray. And the Poet handed Miss Carter the telegram.

"But it can't be she," he reiterated, "if she has lost her memory."

The President of the College seemed to take a sudden resolve: "Yes, it could be she, Mr. Slocumbe," she said. "I'm sorry. I owe you an apology. But it was I who wrote the messages in the Lost and Found."

"You!" exclaimed Miss Carter. "You!"

But the poor Poet cried, "No, no! They

must be hers. They're so clever. I can't bear not to have them hers — Oh, I beg your pardon!" Appalled at his own words, he glared at the President of the College.

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" Miss Armitage was smiling, but her eyes were misty. "Don't — please don't be troubled, dear Mr. Slocumbe. No one ever paid me a prettier compliment."

"You are quits, anyway," said the mischievous voice of the Masefield Professor of Poetry. "He did n't write the Poet's messages."

"I was going to tell her," cried the Poet, wrung and rent between these two women. "But how do you know?"

"Because I wrote them," said the Masefield Professor of Poetry demurely.

"You!" cried the President of the College. "Isabel Carter! I might have known —"

"It seemed to me," Miss Carter explained, "that we were not using the press as we might. So I put in that first notice, — which might have come from either of them, you remember, — as a feeler, to see if one or the other

would respond. If there had been no response, I should have concluded that — well, I don't know just what. But there *was* a response."

"I remember," said Miss Armitage, "we asked each other which, we thought, wrote it, and I said I thought it was the Poet."

"And went and acted on that thought, playing Patty's rôle," laughed Miss Carter.

"I wanted to draw Mr. Slocumbe out of hiding. And I have," said Miss Armitage.

"But they were mailed from all over the lot," said the Poet.

"Oh, that was quite simple," said Miss Armitage. "I was speaking for the College, at various alumnae clubs around the country. And the last ones were posted on my way South."

"Oh, yes," said Miss Carter, "I found it quite simple too." And she added, with a sigh, "They did relieve the tension all round, those messages. But just suppose —"

"You did n't send them all," said the Poet grudgingly. "The last is my own."

"Yes," she cried. "When I read it in the



*Times* yesterday morning, the delightful quotation from *Midsummer Night's Dream*, I knew that you, the real you, were coming; and I could n't stay away."

"I wish I were as sure that she, the real she, was coming too," said Miss Armitage. "But how could it be anyone else?"

They strolled up and down the little green triangle for another ten minutes, looking at the statue and the church; scrutinizing the passing motor cars. The robust man on the granite steps at the corner of Clio Street got up and stretched his legs. A motor car came down Clio Street, slowed up at the corner, hesitated, and crossed over to the little park. There were three people in the car, and as they passed by the robust man he had a good look at them, but they were looking at the green park.

"Here, kid," said the robust man to the messenger boy, "here's the telegrams," and he handed him an envelope. "There's three of them inside, and the telegraph operator at the St. Charles Hotel is waiting for them. Now beat it."

The Poet, the President of the College, and the Masfield Professor of Poetry were down in the wedge of the triangle. When they turned to stroll back to the base, they saw two elderly people and a girl coming toward them over the little bridge.

"It is! It is!" they shouted, and ran, all three, to meet the newcomers.

Pretty Patty Farwell stood still, swaying, her hazel eyes wide and startled, one hand outstretched, groping, dazed. "I remember!" she cried aloud. "I remember! — I am not a boo —"

And the Poet caught her in his arms as she fainted.

## CHAPTER XIX

“SHE’LL be all right in a moment. The shock, you know,” said Dr. Murray. “Stand where she can see you when she opens her eyes. Now — now she ’s coming round.”

And Patty’s candid hazel eyes opened and looked for a long solemn moment into the blue, anxious eyes of the Poet; then, slowly turning, found the sympathetic, familiar, quizzical smile of the Masfield Professor of Poetry; and beyond that, the immense relief in the face of the President of the College.

“I remember,” said Patty. “I am not a boo-tlegger. I am a boo-kseller.”

There was another silent moment, while she gazed again from one to another of the familiar faces. Then she said: —

“Where have I been?”

“In the Fourth Dimension,” the Poet whispered.

She considered him thoughtfully; then

her lips parted in a sudden smile. "I remember," she said.

She sat up after that, on the curving pavement of the little bridge, and they kissed her. All except the Poet. Even old Dr. Murray kissed her. And Mrs. Murray wept a little.

"I'm sure you understand that I should never have carried her off that night if I had thought she would be unable to tell us who she was the next morning," said the Doctor.

"Of course," Miss Armitage acquiesced. Her smile was courteous, but there was reserve in her tone.

Dr. Murray thought he knew how the students of Dickinson College might feel, encountering that smile and that reserve after some escapade not fully covered by the laws of Student Government.

"And we naturally supposed that she had come from New Hampshire, because of the license number on the car."

"Naturally," agreed Miss Armitage.

"Let us hope this will be a lesson to you, Evan," said Mrs. Murray, "though whether

there 's room for improvement at your age, I don't know."

"Nor I," said the Doctor mildly.

"And how we can either of us ever look this child's aunt in the face again, I can't imagine."

"Oh, but she 'll forgive you when she sees what beautiful care you 've taken of me," said Patty. "I hope she has n't worried much. It takes a good deal to disturb Aunt Patience."

"Excuse me, Miss Armitage," said Traffic Officer Murphy, "but if you and your party could move on now, I think it might be just as well. This is a quiet little park, but people *will* gather when they see anybody lying on the ground or surrounded. I 've bluffed them off so far, but not being in uniform or having any real authority round here, I can't do much. So if Miss Patty 's well enough to —"

"Mr. Murphy!" exclaimed Miss Armitage and Miss Carter, with one voice.

"I 'm having two weeks' leave in the South," he explained modestly. "And I doped it out from Lost and Found message number ten that New Orleans was meant by latitude 30° North

and longitude 90° West. And the guidebook told me about the Crescent City. I rather wanted to follow this thing to a finish."

"Why, it's our Mr. Murphy!" cried Patty. "You don't mean that you came all the way down here just to find me?"

The Traffic Officer blushed a deep brick-red. "I'm afraid I did, Miss Patty," he said, "and a great run you've given us. What have you done with that leopard-skin coat with the beaver collar, that we've been chasing all over the map?"

"Oh, Auntie's lovely present," cried Patty, "don't tell me I lost it in the Fourth Dimension!"

"No, no; it's hanging at Savin Hill in my Margie's cedar closet. There was a rip in the seam, from the collision, and we knew you would n't need it down here, so we put you into this camel's-hair Jaeger coat of Margie's," said Mrs. Murray.

"And did you leave the Pierce-Arrow hanging up in the closet, if I might ask?" said Officer Murphy.

"Our car was a little damaged by the col-

lision," Dr. Murray explained. "So we decided to put it in my daughter's garage and take out her Studebaker instead. I gave it to her a year ago."

"Well, I'll say this, Doctor," said Officer Murphy, torn between admiration and exasperation, "if you'd been trying to wipe out the clues on purpose, you could n't have made a cleaner job of it."

He and the Poet, one on each side, guided Patty to the car, and Dr. Murray settled her beside his wife. "She'll be right as a trivet when she's had her lunch," he said gayly. "Now, Miss Armitage, Miss Carter, can't I take you to your hotel? We are at the St. Charles: our first night indoors since we left Washington."

But the President of the College and the Masefield Professor of Poetry said they would walk back with the Poet, and give Patty a chance to rest before lunch.

As the Doctor turned from Prytania into Clio, going towards St. Charles Avenue, Miss Armitage remembered the people in Hawthorne, Mass., who still waited in suspense.



"I wonder if you can take us to the nearest telegraph office, Mr. Murphy," she suggested. "We must send messages at once to Miss Farwell and several others."

"I've sent three wires, Miss Armitage," said Officer Murphy, modestly. "As soon as I got a good look at Miss Patty stepping out of the motor car, I sent them."

"That messenger boy!" ejaculated the Poet.

Officer Murphy looked pleased. He took three telegraph blanks out of his pocket and unfolded them. "I wrote them all out beforehand, so as not to lose any time," he explained. "And I kept copies, thinking you might like to see what I'd said." He handed the copies of the telegrams to Miss Armitage, one by one. "This is what I said to Miss Patience Farwell:—

NIECE HERE SAFE AND WELL WITH DOCTOR  
AND MRS MURRAY WILL ARRIVE HAWTHORNE  
JANUARY FOUR WITH MISS ARMITAGE

ANDREW MURPHY

I hope you will excuse me taking that liberty, Miss Armitage, but I know you have to be

back for the first day of College, on the fifth, and I did n't see Miss Patty staying away from her aunt and the Bookshop any longer when she knew. You see, the day before I left, Miss Patience Farwell told me about the letter she 'd had from Mrs. Murray. She thought you would n't mind her speaking about it to me then, although she said you 'd asked her to keep it dark for a while; but so long as I was coming to New Orleans myself — And this is the message I sent to Mr. Whittemore at the Bank:—

HAVE FOUND MANAGER OF BOOKSHOP SAFE IN  
NEW ORLEANS KIDNAPPED BY MISTAKE IS  
RETURNING AT ONCE SEE CAPTAIN TORREY FOR  
PARTICULARS

ANDREW MURPHY

And this is the wire to Captain Torrey:—

I CLAIM FIVE THOUSAND REWARD FOR FINDING  
MISS PATTY FARWELL RETURNING ON TRAIN  
WITH HER ARRIVING JANUARY FOUR

ANDREW MURPHY”

Miss Armitage read this last telegram over twice, with Miss Carter peering under her

arm. Miss Carter chuckled and Miss Armitage bit her lip.

"The reward," Officer Murphy hesitated; "perhaps that was only a part of the joke."

But Miss Armitage and Miss Carter hastened to reassure him. The Poet shook his hand vigorously.

"I think I'll send another telegram — to my wife," he said, very flushed and radiant. "I thought that reward was a real reward, and yet I did n't quite dare to bank on it. This whole affair — well, we've never known just how to classify it at headquarters. There was no knowing who would have the laugh on him next. And I thought maybe it was on me this time."

## CHAPTER XX

THAT evening, while Miss Armitage and Miss Carter were being entertained at dinner by members of the Faculties of Tulane University and Newcomb College, and Dr. and Mrs. Murray were enjoying *Les Huguenots* at the French Opera House, and Traffic Officer Murphy was attending, ex officio, a boxing match of international importance at the Young Men's Gymnastic Club, a temple of sport hallowed by intimate association with the great John L. Sullivan, Patty Farwell and the Poet were wandering under the moon, through palm-shadowed streets, alongside old galleried houses and gardens fragrant with the monthly roses of southern January.

"So much better than the Opera," said Patty, putting out a hand to touch the stem of a palm tree. "Yes; it's real." She stood still a moment, looking up through the ragged fans at the high-flung moon.

And the Poet's heart stood still. All the

way up St. Charles Street, from the St. Charles Hotel to Lee Circle, and around the Circle into St. Charles Avenue, and along Clio Street to Prytania, he had reminded himself at three-minute intervals that except in novels, and the last chapters of detective stories, one did n't propose to a girl — even though one were absolutely convinced that She was The Girl — the second time one met her. “But,” he also reminded himself, “this is the last chapter of a detective story.”

“When one thinks of the snow-covered world only two days away,” said Patty, her eyes brimming with moonlight, “one can easily understand how Time is a mode of Space, and how we move in that Fourth Dimension as inevitably as we draw breath. Oh, this is the chaperon in the crocheted shawl! I did n't see her this morning. How nice of you to bring me here! And what a darling little old dear, with her orphan at her knee!”

“It does n't seem possible,” said the Poet discontentedly, “that all these six weeks when I've — well — I've thought of you quite frequently — that you've never remem-

bered me at all. I should think — there's such a thing as telepathy. I don't see how you could help —"

"The really queer thing is that I didn't remember the Bookshop," said Patty innocently.

"Oh — the Bookshop!" ejaculated the Poet as if it were a swear word.

"Why, I had eaten, drunk, slept Bookshop for three months," Patty continued, absorbed in her theme. "It was never out of my mind one minute. Aunt Patience said she used to hear me talking about it in my sleep. And a little tap on my head wiped it out completely — shut a little door in the brain. So strange! So disconcerting! Dr. Murray says I should undoubtedly have remembered sooner if there had been anyone or anything to remind me of my own life; but actually I don't believe I've seen a bookshop since we left Hawthorne. We've stayed out on the country roads as much as possible. The Doctor has a passion for short cuts, and we were always losing our way. And we slept in small towns at first, and later out of doors,

and even bought most of our food from the farmers."

"I autographed my *Poems* for you," said the Poet wistfully. "They might have helped you remember."

"Oh, so you did!" she cried. "Oh, oh, I can't bear to have lost them. Where do you suppose they are?"

"In the Fourth Dimension," he said with some bitterness.

They were pacing up and down over the bridge and down to the tip of the triangle; back again over the bridge to circle the base of Margaret's statue.

"The disconcerting things to me are those Lost and Found messages," the Poet continued, still in his mood of discontent. "Yours, that Miss Armitage wrote, I mean. Of course anybody with half a mind could see from internal evidence that I never wrote the ones they thought were mine. That limerick!"

Patty laughed and looked up at him mischievously under the brim of her little close fawn-colored hat.



"Miss Armitage never in this world could have written them of herself," persisted the Poet. "She has n't it in her."

"How delicious you are," laughed Patty. "You're just like the man who looked at the hippopotamus and said, 'There ain't no such animal.'"

"I think there's something very subtle and unaccountable about it," said the Poet obstinately. "You may laugh if you like, but I think your unconscious mind, your psyche, influenced the President's, and she wrote those things —"

"In a trance," laughed Patty.

"I *will* think so," said the Poet, laughing too.

Something in his tone made Patty look at him, and look away hastily.

"Well," she began, with a little tremble in her voice, not of laughter, "you must at least give her the credit of suggesting that it would be a good advertisement for the Bookshop if we disappeared. That was her bright idea, not mine."

"If you call it a bright idea," the Poet

demurred. "It broke my leg, and knocked your memory out of last year into this — yes, it did. If she had n't given people the notion that our disappearance was a joke, they would have hunted for you at once. And you'd have found your memory."

"You're entirely idiotic and illogical," said Patty. "But I must say, when I think of my poor, dear, little aunt, I do feel badly. You'll love my aunt when you know her. She's such a good sport."

"I do now!" said the Poet eagerly.

"She and I are never going to be separated," said Patty irrelevantly. "She's all I've got."

"But you've an acquisitive nature," said the Poet, and stared gloomily across the Park at St. Paul's Church.

"Acquisitive," cried Patty. "That shows how little you know me."

"I've been getting acquainted with you for six weeks. Don't tell me I don't know you. I know you better than you know yourself," cried the Poet. "You have n't given a thought to me in all that time, but I —"

"You 're unkind," said Patty, drooping her head. "I'm sure I should have thought of you — if — I mean — No, I don't mean that —"

"Forgive me," said the Poet wistfully. "But you see how confusing it is, even more confusing for me than for you, because — because I did n't lose my memory."

They paced slowly, thoughtfully, down the wedge to the apex where Prytania Street splits off from Camp Street and the two electric car lines weave together from the two sides of the triangle.

"It makes me think of that night when you read in the Bookshop," said Patty, "and the motor cars, and the trolley, and the steam trains went crashing by like meteors."

"And I had to raise my voice," said the Poet, smiling. "Do you know, I've done a lot of writing these last weeks, in the Fourth Dimension: things I'd like to read you, if you'll let me. You'll see why, when you hear them. My best work, I think."

"We might celebrate our return to the Bookshop —" began Patty.

“Not on your life,” the Poet cried. “It ’s to you I want to read them.” He looked down into her eyes and took her two hands, there on the tip of the triangle with two lines of electric cars weaving past them into a switch. “Don’t you understand?” he whispered.

“It ’s a dream me,” she said, softly, shaking her head at him. “It ’s a Fourth Dimension me — not the real me. You can’t know the real me.”

“But if I do? If I prove to you that I do? You won’t deny it? You ’ll say yes?”

When they got back to the St. Charles Hotel, he wondered, and so did she, if he had proposed to her.









C76i

WITHDRAWN

**WITHDRAWN**

MOUNT ALLISON UNIVERSITY



0 2005 0130092 1

